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The Role Of Group Writing Activity On Disciplinary Literacy Appropriation At University

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**THE ROLE OF GROUP WRITING ACTIVITY ON
DISCIPLINARY LITERACY APPROPRIATION AT
UNIVERSITY**

Constantine Christopher Dimitriou

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

Department of Education

March, 2015

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Signed on behalf of the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences.....

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GLOSSARY

AT	Activity Theory
CoP	Community of Practice
EAL	English as an additional language
EAP	English for academic purposes
EFL	English as a foreign language
ET	Educational Talk
ExT	Exploratory Talk
GWSI	General Writing Skills Instruction
HSS	Humanities and Social Sciences
L1 (English)	English as a first language
L2 (English)	English as a second language
NLS	New Literacy Studies
SCT	Sociocultural Theory
SDA	Sociocultural Discourse Analysis
WAC	Writing across the curriculum
WP	Widening participation
ZPD	Zone of proximal development

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ABSTRACT

The work of Humanities & Social Sciences students involves learning to express disciplinary content in essay assessment to disciplinary norms. Though tutors use a genre for professional writing, literacy is often not part of the classroom discussion. Therefore, many students have difficulty appropriating the communicative tools of that disciplinary genre. This may be solved by a turn in pedagogy towards tutors' awareness of students' processes (Hornsby & Osman, 2014) which may, in turn, improve tutors' feedback. Ethnography has provided insights into students' attitudes, their impressions of feedback and experiences, largely through interview methods, and classroom observation (Saville-Troike, 1989), but assessment writing does not typically occur in class. What was needed was a closer examination of students' literacy processes. This study looked at literacy work through Activity Theory (Leont'ev, 1978) which represents human activity as a contextualised system where a group works together towards an *object*. Group collaboration allows for concepts to be negotiated and for interpretations to be shared, which can aid understanding (Mercer, 1995). This cross-sectional study examined three L2-English Business Studies student groups' collaborative writing with observation of activity as its primary instrument for capturing student literacy work. Using an Educational Talk framework (Mercer, 1995) to examine the qualities of negotiation, this study offers a new understanding of students' processes of literacy work and their possible effect on literacy appropriation. The results showed how the task and other structural tensions drive literacy work, and how the particular attributes of Educational Talk, in a tertiary context, contribute to the negotiation of meaning in the resolution of tensions. It also showed how literacy work involves the inter-mingling of textual work, subject content (Tardy, 2006, 2009) and contextual factors. These indicate the importance of group literacy activity for students, and the importance of understanding group discussions involving literacy work.

Keywords: tertiary disciplinary literacy appropriation, collaborative writing, Activity Theory discourse analysis, exploratory talk, structural tensions, local genre agent, observation

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The university is a modern cultural institution whose history began in 11th century Europe. It exists to aggregate teachers, researchers and students as a hub of knowledge with a vital role in the society. The university system reflects to some degree, a society's view and/or policy about the role of education in society, the needs of the student and of the economy. The university sector in the United Kingdom is typical of Anglophone universities in Western countries where English is a national language (Lillis, 2001). These Anglophone universities are generally experiencing growth for both nation-internal and international reasons.

The reasons for the international popularity of Anglophone universities includes the key role played by English in the world of scientific writing (Lillis et al., 2010). This represents both the popularity of Anglophone journals due to their perceived quality, but also to the popularity of individual articles: "In 2004, 74% of the 52,030 scholarly periodicals indexed by Ulrich's Periodical Directory were published in English. More than 90% of the social science articles in journals tracked by the Institute for Scientific Information in 2004 were published in English (Web of Science, 2005)," (Lillis & Curry, 2006: 3f). This leading role draws foreign, often second-language (L2) speakers of English, researchers and students, into its halls in the expectation of gaining some of the benefits of the Anglophone academic and research environment. This creates a demand for the teaching of the English language. However, at university, the use of the English language is very specialised, due the demands of the different research communities that developed (separately) within its walls (Russell, 1997).

In the country-internal education market, the university functions as a site of tertiary education which is important to students and to society. The belief amongst many students, and the government, is that tertiary education is vital for employment and thus universities attract large percentages of young secondary graduates (Dearing, 1997).

The UK government has had a policy of widening participation (WP) that has been established to address the issue of low enrolments of students from non-traditional university backgrounds. These are students whose families have no experience of university. They may also be from immigrant minorities.

These phenomena (foreign L2-English students and domestic WP) have caused some university pedagogy researchers to question the methods by which students are educated. The reason for this is that these new categories of student do not share the English middle-class

culture that university communication reflects (Lillis, 1999). They therefore may have more difficulty in appropriating the culture, and particularly the methods and modes of communication that are necessary for successful education.

The two phenomena, of the growth in foreign L-2 English students and non-traditional students has raised issues for researchers of university policy and pedagogy. In looking at university policy, the trends are in massification of education, and the reduction of resources (Hornsby & Osman, 2014). They have also found that the top-down educational model is still represented widely in university policy literature (Lea, 2005, Hornsby & Osman, 2014). The reasons that are often given are about the sizes of cohorts, the lack of time, and objective criteria. While research has shown the present state of university policy to be wanting, new university-funded research into improvements have often lacked academic rigour (Haggis, 2009).

The universities are granted powers to award degrees and must therefore set standards for those awards. Students must show attainment, and that is achieved through assessment. Writing is the most common vehicle for demonstrating that knowledge through, most often through examinations or coursework (Gardner & Nesi, 2013). These assessments provide an opportunity for students to use language to indicate their level of achievement. However, the use of language is not decided by the university, but by the discipline.

1.1 University disciplines, culture and language

Therefore, language is an issue that arises from the educational milieu of the discipline in which students are studying. Looked at another way, writing is directly linked to the appropriation of subject content (Ivanič, 2004). Language mediates the learning and teaching process, from notes to books and databases. That language is, to some degree, a specialised use of English, particular to that discipline. That includes the words and the modes of communication, and most importantly the discourse norms.

The use of language is varied as university disciplines reflect the discourse of their associated professional fields. The complex departmental and disciplinary cultures of different subject areas (e.g. chemistry) match with professional disciplines that are themselves often university-based. Therefore, entering a particular university subject domain means entering a particular culture with its own history and methods of communication (Belcher, 1994).

The particularly dominant mode of assessment writing, in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), in Anglophone countries, tends to be the essay format (Lillis, 2001). There is a particularly strong focus on the essay, its form and content, that does not exist in other university systems (Zamel & Spack 1998, Leki, 1999). This form of assessment requires an understanding of the way language is used in a discipline particularly as it pertains to written communication. It is implied that this happens indirectly, through the education process.

This acculturation does not always happen as well as is necessary, meaning that some students feel that they are left with a communication deficit. Attempts at remediation of this problem have seen the development of departments or adjunct services that have the purpose of teaching literacy. Over the last 40 years, this professional field has transformed its sense of self, through iterations as Writing & Study Skills (Jordan, 1999, Wingate, 2006), English for Academic Purposes (or Academic Writing) and academic literacy (Lillis, 2001).

This has occurred through the parallel development of the research field of academic literacy that studies the role of writing in university, as can be seen in journals such as the Journal of English for Academic Purposes, Studies in Higher Education and Written Communication. These have taken perspectives which have highlighted classroom, linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of disciplinary literacy. This research has improved our understanding of the culture of disciplines as it is expressed in writing. It is this research that is slowly creating change within university disciplines at some universities because it is there that literacy should take its place on an even standing with learning, and teaching.

1.2 Research into university language pedagogy

Research that has focused on the role of university subject tutors has indicated that they play a complicated role in education. They play a role in the learning process, as the classroom leader. They also are directly involved in the assessment of that learning. However, they also have a membership in their professional research community. Unfortunately, it is this research part of their profile which is a priority for most hiring of tutors. Thus, there is often little time for the expansion of literacy into existing tertiary disciplinary education models (Yee, 2014). Literacy has also been set back by massification. One to one contact, in tutorials, between tutors and students has been lessened. The shortfall in contact could be replaced by training in tertiary pedagogy.

The training of lecturers in tertiary pedagogy is somewhat common (Light & Cox, 2001). Many universities have a post-graduate certificate course that is either required or optional, for new tutors. Having taken such a course, I have seen some ambivalence towards certain key issues, like the literacy processes of students. In the discussions of learning, assessment and feedback (as a teaching skill) (Light & Cox, 2001), writing is lost, or dealt with as a problem of tutoring.

Foremost is the perception of the student as an independent learner. In this respect, tutors who want to assist students through feedback are encouraged to not provide too much support (Light & Cox, 2001: 178). The thought behind this is that students will demand ever more support in such situations. This belief has also been behind the theories of self-regulation in tertiary policy research. The concept of self-regulation has a long theoretical history, but not one backed by research. Haggis (2009) notes that dedication to examining the concept of self-regulation through research is weak.

There is likewise an approach to student literacy that could be described as lacking. The approach of many subject tutors is that literacy is a superficial problem of literacy skills (Woodward-Kron, 2007, Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000). Many L2-English-speaking lecturers have also had assistance with their writing for publication purposes, through “literacy brokers,” (Lillis & Scott, 2006: 4). However, the social approaches to student learning are beginning to gain adherents (Lea, 2005, Smithenry & Patchen, 2014). They are questioning the superficial transfer model of learning that is still common in educational literature through approaches that seek to understand the role of student agency in learning (Pym & Kapp, 2013). This is coupled with more student-centred research showing the need to integrate literacy and content (Wingate, 2006) and seeking solutions to perennial problems of feedback comprehension (Dowden et al., 2013). It is within this new trend that I place my own research.

In order to better understand what would aid students learning, research into tertiary students’ experiences has taken many forms. Social research has looked at the power structures of universities and recognised that students are involved in a process that tends to wield power over them (Lea & Street, 1998). This is however common in learning institutions, since teachers are assessors. However, with regards to literacy, it is the lack of transparency which is most worrying. Lillis has called this an “institutional practice of mystery” (1999:127). What that implies is that students are assessed based on a disciplinary genre, that tutors know, but

that does not factor in the classroom. Therefore, literacy is marginalised in the learning process. It is often limited to summative feedback.

Other researchers, realising this feedback process as a singular opportunity for students to perhaps acquire literacy assistance from their tutors, investigate how students learn or can learn from feedback (Poulos & Mahoney, 2008, Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006). This research is looking at this form of disciplinary communication between tutor and student, and trying to understand how literacy can best be improved. They have noticed that feedback depends on the type of assessment, and the discipline. However, this does not look at what students do with that feedback, and what it means to their writing processes.

Another branch of research has been looking at a better understanding of the kind of knowledge that is contained in the concept of tertiary literacy. It has used ethnographic methods to gain an understanding of the processes of literacy learning (Casanave, 2002, Lea 2004) by interviewing students. Others have enquired about what kind of genre knowledge and subject knowledge is required in order to write an essay (Tardy, 2006, 2009). These studies have tried to show how the process is understandable, and is the basis for understanding students' needs. However, literacy is also about the work of creation, of creating text.

The type of research that looks into text creation comes out of action research within academic literacy, at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. This has tried to understand students' processes of writing, in the classroom, by observing groups of students writing texts, over short periods of time (Storch, 2002, 2005). However, this research is not helpful for those interested in disciplinary literacy because most writing in the disciplines occurs outside of the classroom, and is often a process that occurs over a period of days and weeks. Some other research has begun to look at the writing process at a macro level by studying students' learning journals (Li, 2013) or by observing their group work (Yang, 2014). However, these studies are not looking at the use of language, or the effect of language as a mediator for literacy appropriation.

Students are expected to write alone, using a genre. The student develops a sense of how language can be used, by using it. If this is visible, in group activity, then it can indicate how literacy develops.

Research has shown how the tutor and the disciplinary genre both play a role in the appropriation of tertiary literacy. However, it is not known how these factor in the decisions made by students when writing.

Therefore, it would be beneficial if a system of analysing student writing could be found that could look at the role of language and contextual factors, and the role of activity on appropriation. This could provide small-scale studies that would have value to those who are interested in understanding and improving students' processes.

Tertiary literacy studies are in need of research on group literacy performance to broaden our understanding of students' literacy awareness and needs. Sociocultural Theory can provide a way to examine a contextualised activity process, focusing on the use of mediational tools. It is for this reason that my study will seek to answer the Research Question:

How do the qualities of tertiary literacy group work aid our understanding of the factors which affect the negotiation of disciplinary genre literacy?

This will involve studying the qualities of literacy discussion, both as regards the negotiation and the expression of literacy concepts.

1.3 The future of tertiary literacy pedagogy

Sociocultural Theory and Activity Theory are research frameworks that focus on change in social settings. They are particularly important for studying learning processes, as those are important instances of change. These theories are often used to examine the effect of language use in these social activities. The use of a genre is a use of language as writing is a form of communication. Discussions of writing are a place where genre and spoken language are fundamental psychological tools which aid students in improving their understanding of how to write.

It is for this reason that I wanted this study to test a method of researching literacy appropriation activity. I wanted to investigate the way that students work together on literacy tasks so that I could learn about the linguistic tools they use to help each other learn, and the benefits of group work.

This research project was designed to study student groups' approach to writing, in natural activity. This involves the examination of group dynamics and the group members' use of literacy knowledge as expressed in group discourse.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will explain tertiary literacy and its place in the university, particularly in a Humanities or Social Sciences (HSS) discipline, in which assessment tends towards the essay format (Lillis, 2001). In so doing, it will provide the groundwork for my dynamic study of university literacy negotiation, under the rubric of Sociocultural Theory and Activity Theory (SCT/AT).

Within the university context, education provides a civic role for the researchers and educators. The adult students are charged with entering a discipline that has barriers to entry that create a challenge. One of those is literacy appropriation. This chapter will show how literacy has been viewed by institutions, and how they view the roles of tutor and student. There will be an examination of how literacy is taught, in the high-stakes assessment phase, and the tendency towards summative feedback without dialogue. It will be shown how this feedback is often insufficient for students, and little research effort has been expended to ameliorate this trend. This will lead to an analysis of perspectives on more effective literacy appropriation and how that drives the need for universities and disciplines to understand better the processes that students go through in order to achieve sufficient literacy. The final segment will show how certain theoretical frameworks view research into tertiary literacy, and how AT can provide a way forward.

2.2 The University- Context of learning and literacy

This section will describe the university as an institution which is situated culturally and historically as an important sociohistorical edifice for higher learning. It provides a legal framework, applies relevant government policy and provides quality control processes. Its main social goal is to educate students, making them into graduates who take on important roles in society from one of the many disparate professional disciplines (Russell, 1997).

The educational role of universities is but one of its functions in a society. Bourdieu (1977) and Fairclough (1992) argue that the context of university fits within the wider cultural context. They view universities as part of the social power structure, and as part of the indoctrination to the political system. Students are judged not only on their understanding of disciplinary knowledge, but on their ability to replicate the status quo and to know their place within it.

The next section will explain the role of the culture and history of the university in Anglophone countries, vis-à-vis society and students.

2.2.1 The Anglophone university and academic culture

The English-speaking, or Anglophone university, in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, has a particularly important place in the world of tertiary learning, being that English is the leading language of professional disciplinary communication (Lillis et al., 2010). This is encouraging more L2-English tertiary students to migrate for an education, and also encourages more L2-English professionals to seek to write English-language journal articles. For entry into English-speaking disciplines, there is a requirement for an understanding of popular writing formats.

These formats have arisen through the individual professional communities that have developed around bodies of knowledge, such as Engineering. The professional (research) and the academic (teaching) branches of any discipline overlap in many ways due to the historical links and exchanges of knowledge between them, such as in the dissemination of research by staff who also teach. University tutors are typically active in their respective professional bodies (Russell, 1997: 504). In this way, tutors belong to a type of disciplinary community that reaches beyond the walls of the university. The discipline and the wider professional field share objectives, a common history (Becher & Trowler, 2001, Russell, 1995) and common tools, among which is the tools and methods of communication. The professional bodies most often communicate through journal articles and books.

The university, as an institution differs in some ways from the professional sphere. The university provides, beyond its base for research, an environment for the education of students. This is the academic/educational sphere, within which students strive to become educated. The university, through its disciplines, provides students with a structured, rule-based interface for young adult students, and their educational needs for professional and theoretical knowledge (Abasi & Graves, 2008: 222). This provides students with a staged set of lessons. These students engage with the content knowledge, and the tools of the discipline, not necessarily to gain entry into the academic discipline, but to perhaps gain entry into an associated professional domain.

A university HSS discipline organises this framework by setting its own standards of teaching, and by the assessing of students' educational attainment. Tutors are part of this university educational community because of their dual role as teachers and assessors. They are trained in the subject content. They can thus engage students in the learning of content. Implicit in this work of education is the disciplinary manner of communicating knowledge, done through the use of language. However, performing well in assessments requires that students appropriate the language norms of their discipline.

2.2.2 Genre

Tutors are implicitly aware of the norms of writing in their field (Sadler, 1998), and replicate those norms when engaged in professional communication, writing or reading. Russell (1997) refers to these writing norms of a discipline (e.g. Sociology) as a genre, though a discipline may have more than one genre. My study operates with a social and historical definition of genre which states that:

a genre is the ongoing use of certain material tools (marks, in the case of written genres) in certain ways that worked once and might work again, a typified, tool-mediated response to conditions recognized by participants as recurring. (Russell, 2009: 43)

This genre is a psychological tool for those in the “knowledge communities” (Northedge, 2003). In other words, it is linked with the expression of knowledge. Rather than being prescriptive, the genre provides for a culturally- and historically-situated (Becher & Trowler, 2001) incomplete set of linguistic & discoursal parameters, within which the proficient use of language allows members to co-operate in research and the furthering knowledge (Bazerman, 1994, Russell, 1997).

The concept of genre, then, functions as the main way of viewing the communicative tools of a discipline. A genre, though it is hard to define any genre clearly, generally encompasses the socially-based habits that regulate how certain texts are written within a discipline. The social basis is largely derived from the professional bodies formed of members of the same field, often in the boards of journals and other forms of publications, who judge the genre that is used to deliver disciplinary content. It is for this reason that no genre is perfectly stable. As knowledge progresses, so the written language used to express it often changes (Russell, 1995).

This is one reason why literacy in any one genre, within university education, requires a use of language that sets it apart from other genres. Therefore, university science has stronger links

with professional science than it does with other subjects in the university, particularly as regards writing.

2.2.3 Tutors: genre, power and responsibility

One way in which the university discipline differs from the professional is that a main purpose of a university discipline is to provide an environment for students to learn about a subject. University tutors, as members of a university discipline have the professional responsibility (to the university) of inducting tertiary students into the discipline through classroom-based teaching and assessment regimes (Lea & Street, 1998) helping them become junior members of a discipline who understand aspects of the knowledge, research methods and the written genre of that discipline.

A disciplinary genre has a direct effect on the classroom-disciplinary genre. Russell (1997) “traces the relations of disciplinary genre systems to educational genre systems, through the boundary of the classroom genre system.” The classroom genre is not qualitatively at the level of the professional use of the disciplinary genre. Tutors’ expectations of the student genre are measured by the course, the year level and the pedagogical goals of the tutor. The tutor is important, being construed as the local agent of the genre, as far as the students are concerned (Gimenez, 2012). Students use tutors as a reference point for their understanding of genre. Indeed, the local agent may give more concern to subject content than writing (Tardy, 2006).

Tutors often provide students with reference to versions or facsimiles of the genre norms, indirectly. These can be found in teaching materials, assessment task instructions, classroom discussions and advice, responses to students’ questions, or through formative feedback and summative feedback on students’ writing.

Tutors are also part of the university power structure. The imposition is most readily felt in the area of assessment (Lea & Street, 1998). Assessment is the domain where the standards of a discipline, a university and a tutor overlap. “This is a sensitive area because learning, and the tutor-student relationship meet with the institutional policies,” (Abasi & Graves, 2008:222). The university is the awarding body, while the discipline and/or the tutor set the assessment tasks. The tutor (in context) sets the standards, and the degree to which a replication of a genre is expected.

This confers upon tutors the responsibility to teach the genre in some suitable way. To the degree to which this does not occur, there is a power disparity between tutors and students that is maintained. Coffin & Donohue (2012) studied the relationship between a student's text and the context of their work, and particularly the power and knowledge disparities between teachers and students (see also Lea & Street, 1998). Lea & Street (1998, see also Carless, 2006, Hattie & Timperley, 2007) interpret this power relationship to be one where tutors have the literacy knowledge and students struggle to understand, maintaining their status as followers. The effect of feedback on literacy appropriation (including students' literacy capabilities) (e.g. Carless, 2006) is affected by this power relationship. Nevertheless, literacy plays a role in all students' processes of education, in a tertiary environment.

2.3 Literacy and its role in tertiary education

As the study of literacy at university is the study of contextualised disciplinary writing (invisible discipline as context), this entails discipline-specific writing. When discussing literacy and students, the focus is on the appropriation of a particular disciplinary genre and the processes by which this happens.

Ivanič (1998), who approaches writing as social practice, shows how students have a multiplicity of literacies, which they attempt to develop (as needed) in order to participate in university. My study accepts the definition of literacy, from the New London Group (The New London Group, 1996, Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, Kalantzis & Cope, 2014) as being *multiliteracies* (see also Palincsar & Ladewski, 2006 for another perspective). This means to say that the type of communication, or communication tool affects the type of literacy employed, both in reading and writing, inside and outside of schooling environments.

Examples of applicable (overlapping) literacies for university students are: information literacies (research, reading books), technological literacies (computer software, Internet, database searches); critical literacy (voice, agency, active education); visual literacy (images); cultural literacy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, Palincsar & Ladewski, 2006). A student's use of what is known as academic (or disciplinary) literacy, closely associated with writing for assessment purposes, is built on this flexible interpretation. Research has shown that, within a person's tertiary literacy awareness, academic literacies can be shown as different from the everyday literacies of the individual (see Figure 1), while in reality, the student can draw from any type of literacy awareness, when writing for assessment.

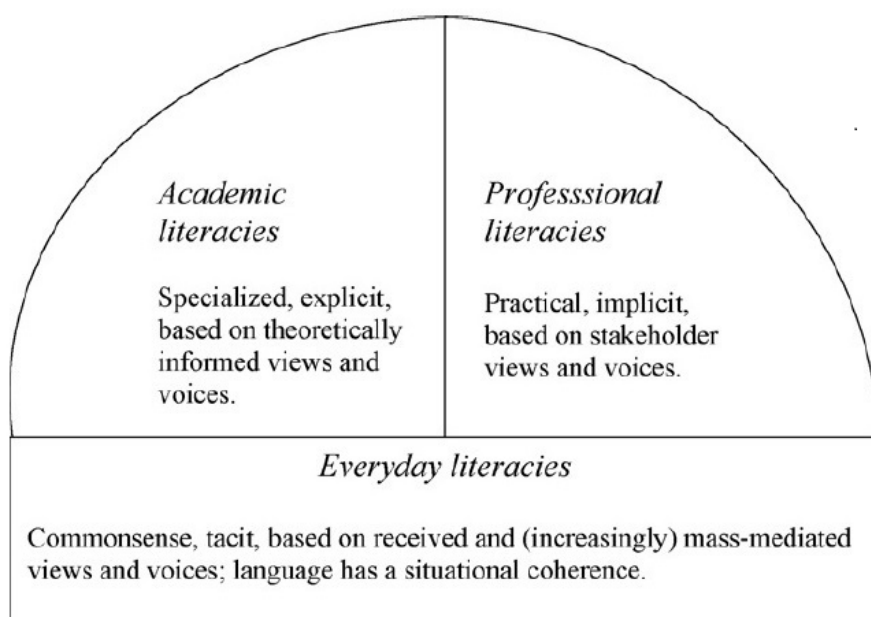


Figure 1 A model of three separate groups of tertiary literacies (Macken-Horarik et al., 2006: 245)

The writing of a text is but one form of literacy. This means to say that in describing academic literacy work, the role of other literacies become evident. However, the productive part of literacy, writing, is limited by disciplinary literacy norms, for students.

This disciplinary literacy acts as a form of communication within the discipline. The degree to which it represents the disciplinary genre depends on the way it is perceived by the classroom tutor. Therefore, for my study, I will support a localised definition of genre (Gimenez, 2012) that depends on the tutor's perception (perhaps seen in tutor advice to students). That indicates an ideological definition of literacy (Street, 1995). It represents the power of the tutor (Lea & Street, 1998) in the classroom group as representative of the genre, and tutor/assessor.

2.3.1 History of tertiary literacy research

The first attempts to study the phenomenon of tertiary literacy tended to view academic literacy in a normative fashion. The object of the research tended to be examples of academic writing, typically in the form of journal articles (Gardner & Nesi, 2013) as if that had some bearing on student coursework essays. The methods of analysis included corpus studies of key features of texts, or used discourse analysis of larger extracts (Swales, 1990, 2004). These studies tended to find that certain disciplines tended to have particular uses of academic

language (Hyland, 2000, 2004). This marked out the genres of disciplines as an item of study, but also as a goal, by association, for student literacy appropriation.

The analysis tended to work well with a strong trend in university pedagogy to place emphasis on the self-regulating student who had responsibility to learn how to write up to a standard (Nightingale & O'Neill, 1994). Thus, the textual analyses of professional writing tended to propound the theory that academic writing was an issue of normative behaviour (Lillis & Scott, 2007, Swales, 1990, Hyland, 2000).

The professional textual norms were then used as proof when indicating that a student's failure to meet the norm was a failing of the student. The writing and language skills of a student were said to be given attributes of the student. As a result, students who were experiencing difficulty in meeting the normative standard were dealt with in a remedial fashion. Indeed, "'language' and 'literacy' tended only to become visible institutionally when construed as a problem" (Lillis, 1999). This marginalised writing (and literacy) as if it were a task, like any other.

This issue is still often dealt with by resorting to language support from writing specialists, often referred to as English-for-Academic-Purposes (EAP) tutors. Such tutors exist in most UK universities, where they are often found teaching generic writing-skills courses. While some view this service as superficial "editing", and just about language (Woodward-Kron, 2007), they are missing the possibility that language is inextricably linked with learning and with expression of content, according to disciplinary norms. Other disciplinary voices are heard to denigrate such EAP consultations because of the belief that it creates dependence in students (Woodward-Kron, 2007).

A change in perspective came when it was discovered that academic literacy was representative of middle class culture and use of language (Lillis, 1999). In this way, university literacy tended to favour English native-speaker middle class students. This arose because of an awareness of the historical context of the British university, its exclusivity, and its middle class culture. Lacking a middle-class background would tend to indicate a lack of awareness of academic culture. It is for that reason that economically-marginal students need the most literacy help (Poulos & Mahoney, 2008).

This came to the fore due to the policy in the US and UK of widening participation (Russell, 1995: 21), which has provided opportunities for families of low socio-economic level. Universities are also interested in the retention of those students. This group included many

home students for whom English was a second language (L2 English) additional language (EAL) Northedge, 2003 in Macken-Horarik, et al., 2006 , Russell, 1995: 21). This demographic trend was also coupled with another L2-English cohort. There has come to be a large body of students from abroad studying in the UK, for whom English was a foreign language (EFL). For that reason, much research shifted into linking literacy deficits to the personal history of students (and the student's family's history) in Anglophone university education.

The students from both the widening participation cohort and the L2 cohort have similar problems of adjusting to an academic culture which they may know little about, and thus have more difficulty in conceptualising their path to literacy and a degree (Tardy, 2006, 2009). They are a sizeable cohort. International students were 10% of undergraduate, but fully 40% of taught and research post-graduate students (2006-07, UKCISA in Hay et al., 2010).

The particular problems that these disadvantaged groups may face have been studied. Lillis (2001) investigated the experiences of a number of non-traditional students as regards contextual issues surrounding their literacy practices and the tasks they had to complete. Her major findings were the degree of difficulty that students had in interpreting the criteria of tasks, and the feedback from tutors, which is similar to the findings of Abasi & Graves (2008) and Hay et al., (2010), for adult students.

This socio-economic and cultural demographic issue hastened a re-assessment of literacy research to a less normative position regarding literacy deficits in students. After this stage, where cultural socialisation was current, the academic literacy movement came to the fore. Russell et al. (2009) also showed how the academic literacy movement subsumed and surpassed previous perspectives on academic writing (see also Waring, 2011). Within academic literacy, the end goal of literacy is not socialisation into university or the "skills" required for meeting of objective writing standards (Cazden, 2001).

Literacy was the method of entry into a complex system where meaning-making is contested and where power relations play a role in students' processes of literacy appropriation. Literacy is now seen as an important social practice (Cazden, 2001). That indicates the social component of the disciplinary community and the microcommunity of the individual classroom group. The practice aspect indicates that it is developed through contextualised work. This spawned two parallel systems of analysis, Academic Literacies (Lillis, 2008) and New Literacy Studies (NLS- Street, 1984, 2005) that used similar ethnographic research methods and epistemologies. They have studied universities from the perspective of the classroom, and from individual

students to describe the dynamic environment. Some of their first findings have revealed the power disparities in the classroom.

The cultural construction of the student, as learner, in the university, is a contributing factor to literacy appropriation habits and the expectations of literacy made by tutors. The historical context of scholarship has put a priority on students' independent learning (Nightingale & O'Neill, 1994). This is also implicit in teaching and assessment.

In the concept of independent learning, the student is expected to progressively more independently learn how to acquire the knowledge and skills that will allow that student to succeed. That means that the tutor is expected to play a progressively smaller role in student learning. This concept has been represented in research as self-regulation, loosely taken from SCT roots. For example, Butler and Winne (1994) created their model of self-regulation from a number of models drawn from educational and psychological fields (examples from education being Bandura, 1993, Corno, 1993, Paris & Byrnes, 1989, and Zimmerman, 1989). Their version includes research about students' affect, self-generated feedback in decision making, and belief systems. Their studies of individual students examined the functions of knowledge and beliefs in cognitive engagement, selecting goals, and their strategies (Butler & Winne, 1994: 247).

This self-regulation is presented as the theoretically ideal condition of the tertiary student (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006), and something that students should aspire to. It is within this state of being that students could be trained to do, that feedback can be effectively co-opted. There is some proof that a greater awareness of feedback as a part of a classroom process may indicate that self-regulation is possible (Pokorny & Pickford, 2010). This self-improvement may be seen by students as "self-assessment", wherein feedback is used to improve on weaknesses (Pokorny & Pickford, 2010). Self-regulation is the ability of students (in this case) to extrapolate the lesson learned and use the lesson's content independently.

The tutor can assist students in instilling self-regulation as a scholarly habit (Rogoff, 1990), as they themselves had had experience as students. In order to do so, the tutor must understand what it is that the student cannot learn to do by herself (Rogoff, 1990). A tutor can then assist a student, but only sufficiently to let the student self-regulate, in theory. That degree of help is known as scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976, Wood & Wood, 1996). This process of self-regulation is likely to be for the purposes of learning subject content, because there is little mention of literacy in the literature. Perhaps literacy is subsumed in the list of students' self-

regulation tasks. However, there is an important contradiction that affects literacy scaffolding. Firstly, literacy appropriation can only function as an integral part of students' self-regulation process if literacy concepts are successfully communicated. Such scaffolding requires discussions between tutor and student, or between the tutor and the classroom group.

This is due to the nature of genre and literacy as items of learning. It is the "crucial relationship between writing and access to academic discourse" that makes genre appropriation a "pass key" for students (Macken-Horarik et al., 2006:243), in terms of form (writing) and content which are intertwined. The flexibility of the genre (in use), coupled with a focus on the complexity of the content delivered through writing, means that literacy appropriation processes are necessarily different and more complex than those of content appropriation.

However, this model may not dove-tail well with the typical methods of inculcating literacy appropriation. If this literacy advice is realised through individual summative feedback, there may not be opportunities for scaffolding. In practice, in the semester system at British universities the majority of tutor literacy input is in the form of summative feedback, delivered after a course has ended (Lillis, 2001): "Usually, this feedback is not available during learning activities, but is given after a task has been completed or a test of achievement has been administered," (Butler & Winne, 1995: 246). This lack of classroom discourse is a missed literacy teaching opportunity.

Other types of literacy teaching have also met with some rejection by tutors. Though some success has been shown in science pedagogy (Ellis et al., 2007), many tutors view the provision of writing models (examples of a successful tasks) for students as being too much help (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006: 207). They believe that students will copy a large part of the format. This indicates that there is a fear of copying, which is not allowed.

It would seem ideal to have disciplines explain what type of literacy teaching is allowed. However, despite the availability of training in lecturers' pedagogical training courses (e.g. post-graduate certificate level, in the UK- Light & Cox 2001), many lecturers are not trained to teach the literacy skills of the genre(s) that they know. This exists in a context where literacy is generally not viewed as being directly linked to learning (Tardy, 2006). The role of literacy appropriation is thus marginalised. This lack of literacy teaching can frustrate students and their progress (Abasi & Graves, 2008) and lead to misunderstandings between tutor and student.

Firstly, there are differences amongst (and between) tutors and students regarding "interpretations of what is involved in student writing," (Lea & Street, 1998). Students'

difficulties may also result from literacy teaching methods, at university, that have often been called a “tacit apprenticeship” (Russell, 1995: 21). This includes implicit writing conventions (Lillis, 1999). Despite being key aspects of genres, literacy and pedagogy, the meaning of such concepts as epistemology, authority and contestation (Hyland, 2002c) is left implicit in university education (Russell et al., 2009, Coffin & Donohue, 2012). Lillis has called this lack of clarity in teaching and assessment an “institutional practice of mystery” (1999:127) that begins with the abstruse nature of assessment tasks. As assessment is a primary driver of literacy work, it is important to discover its role in literacy appropriation.

2.3.2 Assessment as literacy appropriation

Students are explicitly aware of the demands of coursework assessment and its link to content learning. However, literacy is central to the expression of this educational attainment (Lillis, 2001). In the students’ eyes, they are involved in the process of attaining a degree, completing whatever work that might entail. Even though writing factors in the degree, through assessment, that does not mean that the issue of literacy will factor, explicitly in a student’s developmental process.

While, taken from the perspective of pedagogy, subject content may seem to be relatively fixed, a genre is a dynamic goal for a student that is nonetheless closely related to content learning: “As ‘forms of life,’ genres and the activity systems they operationalize are (temporarily) regularized, stabilized, through routinized, typified tool-use within and among (sub)groups,” (Bazerman, 1994). The genre is only routinised for students (to some degree) by the demands of assessment (both their writing and tutor feedback). If literacy is typically found only in assessment, i.e. the writing of assessment tasks, this affects the way students use a genre.

The purposes of writing assessments are complex. It is necessary for students to “demonstrate proficiency to the assessor,” and yet the “audience,” the real or imagined person or group which the text is written to, can vary (Gardner & Nesi, 2013: 34). This sense of audience likely connotes that student work is to be written in a (version of) a genre of the discipline, as a mock communicative act. The process itself provides students with the opportunity to develop their literacy and to give “reasoned opinions based on evidence” that may involve their own research. In HSS, assessments have tended to be called “essays,” which could be considered a

genre in some disciplines. This form of writing as assessment has spawned a descriptive category of “essayist literacy” (Gee, 1989 in Macken-Horarik, et al., 2006).

The precise description of the range of texts in HSS student writing is somewhat more complex. Each assessment type places slightly different demands for organisation and use of genre. Instead of accepting self-declared text type labels, Gardner and Nesi (2013: 35) have refined the categorisation of written assignment text types, by separating text types into 13 “genre families,” by their main purpose. For example, the “essay” category includes works where students develop an argument. Another important type for my study is the “explanation” type of text wherein students are required to “demonstrate a systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study” which is more “neutral” as regards argumentation, and “might include a description of a business” (Gardner & Nesi, 2013: 35).

Neither this, nor any other definition of a genre prescribes any particular words for genre realisation. Though a student could copy the genre directly from a source text, university rules would not permit such plagiarism. In other words, students are to interpret the genre of source documents, and produce a unique text of their own (Lewis, 2010) by interpreting source material, showing an awareness of epistemology, following university plagiarism rules.

Assessment tasks are as much about success at the assessment itself, and success at showing learning of content, as they are about the successful use of a genre. Regardless, students are engaging in literacy (and genre writing) when they participate in assessment. This is why the assessment task plays such an important role in literacy. It drives the students’ use of their literacy awareness.

HSS tutors are conversant in these aspects writing. However, that genre knowledge does not often factor highly in teaching (Hounsell, 1988 in Macken-Horarik, et al., 2006, Yang, 2014), but only in assessment and feedback. Therefore, this requirement for novelty, under stressful conditions, places much of the onus for genre learning and use on the tertiary student.

These aspects of assessment give the impression that “writing is a ‘high stakes’ activity,” for students (Lillis & Scott, 2007: 9) due to the importance of assessment and the risk that students take in using a genre they may not understand. The genre often seems peripheral to the educational process. This contradiction between literacy teaching and literacy expectations (Lea & Street, 1998, Lillis, 1999) makes literacy a place of tension, and a complex challenge for students. This difficult task could be a source of tension, between tutor and students that feedback can only partial alleviate.

Feedback, as a function of assessment, is where tutors tend to teach literacy, indirectly, to students. If literacy teaching (i.e. summative feedback) is left until after a course, this could be considered as marginalising literacy. It could be said that literacy is therefore taken for granted by many tutors. This may indicate a tutors' (or a discipline's) perception of the low pedagogical importance of literacy. McCarthy & Fishman (1991:193) note that tutors are often interested only in *what* students say rather than *how* (see also Yang, 2014). This seems to parallel well the perceived lack of concern by "disciplinary experts" about student essays (Johns, 2008 in Gardner & Nesi, 2013: 28). This may occur because tutors often see the language of their disciplinary genre(s) as a transparent purveyor of meaning (Lillis & Turner, 2001).

This lack of focus on genre, where the tutor's expectations of genre appears to be low, may cause students to resort to a "default genre", general-knowledge (English, 2006:87). This version of English may be enough to be successful in some circumstances. However, variability amongst tutors, which is a function of their professional identity, may make understanding of genre more difficult for students. Nevertheless, the tutor's view of literacy, related to a particular task, is a reference point that students require, if only for success at assessment.

A tutor's extended education within a discipline and ease of use with regards to the genre, and other tools of this particular culture, can mean that the need to teach the genre is not necessarily perceptible to the tutor. What they might not see is the cultural basis of much of the language in the disciplines (Lillis & Turner, 2001). While tutors use genre to acquire (and create) knowledge, students also need access to the genre for their own learning. Yet, there are large numbers of students for whom English is not a transparent medium. Therefore, students' perceptions of tutors' literacy advice is necessary

These literacy gap show the contradiction of a classroom activity system which uses writing as part of a disciplinary culture and yet does not teach it to students directly. Literacy and genre only factor in assessment. The responsibility for assessment, appropriation and thus academic success is placed on the student. This is one reason why my study will investigate students' literacy appropriation processes. As literacy and assessment co-occur, assessment criteria can play a role in how students write.

2.3.3 Assessment criteria and literacy

Universities have tended to increase their use of assessment criteria as a manner of improving quality control. This setting of criteria is at times created with the assistance of pedagogues or tutors. This is an attempt to systematise assessment standards. For success to be judged, an assessment must express a judgement. That judgement should be justified against the assessor's goals and criteria (Taras, 2005). However, the process of (summative) assessment is perhaps more complex than criteria will allow.

Assessment tasks have goals, along with a set of criteria that are explicit, though they can be implicit (Scriven, 1967 in Taras, 2005). Explicit criteria assist in the student's understanding and satisfying these task goals ("transparency" Taras, 2005). However, making them explicit does not necessarily make them easy to interpret. One complication is that the meaning of goals and criteria do differ between assessors (Taras, 2005, Price et al., 2003 in Pokorny & Pickford, 2010). This can therefore have an effect on feedback and marks.

The requirements for criticality and originality (if not creativity) are themselves fraught with complexities under the conditions of assessment and assessment criteria. This creates a paradox in that creativity cannot be specified in detail, and thus in assessment criteria (Lewis, 2010). Further, creativity itself is constrained to the degree that students are limited as to their source material, and by tutors' perceptions of the "predetermined outcomes" of set tasks that dominate assessment (Lewis, 2010). Nevertheless, in light of explicit criteria, it is still possible for students' creative work to be generative of literacy appropriation opportunities, which need to be studied.

At times, explicit criteria can become inflexible, objective criteria. This can create its own problems for tutors who try to follow them. Tutors may be required to use feedback proformas that are imposed by their university. They tend to frustrate teachers as well, who could resort to ticking boxes and not giving any feedback: "S5: I got 8 out of 20, and I've got nothing written on my [feedback] sheet at all." (students' comments- Hounsell et al., 2008 :63). If students need feedback to improve their performance, then they are expressing a desire to learn. Therefore, more research is required that can show students as active agents in their own learning processes.

Nevertheless, criteria should help students comprehend the goals of assessment. There is ample proof that students are looking for such an explanation in feedback so that they can recognise their level of competence (Pokorny & Pickford, 2010). The conceptualisation of

literacy appropriation as an open (transparent) process is based on Sadler's (1989) belief that students must know what an assessment task's performance goal is and the degree to which they have reached that goal, known as the gap in performance. This should also begin to fill the gap in knowledge between tutor and student (Carless, 2006, Hattie & Timperley, 2007, Nicol, 2010, Poulos & Mahony, 2008 and Sadler, 2010). This would go some way to building an "informed and shared assessment community" (Taras, 2005: 472). One way to do this would be through using the criteria to explain the feedback.

2.3.4 The role of feedback in literacy

Feedback is said to be key to a transformative learning process (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Transformation is believed to lead to students' "self-regulation", which is a concept akin to independent learning. They believe that the knowledge of how to self-regulate is something which can be instilled in students (of all ability levels), allowing them to become more independent and successful learners and writers.

This feedback model of literacy teaching is one where feedback is linked with performance: "feedback is conceptualized as information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding. Feedback thus is a 'consequence' of performance." (Hattie & Timperley, 2007: 81). This means that the student must take the risk, under assessment conditions, but are rewarded with feedback.

There are two broad approaches for the writing of feedback, evaluative and constructive. The former method involves judging students on how well they control "what John Bean called 'expert insider prose'," (1996 in Russell et al., 2009: 413). In this 'correction' mode, which may help with assessment, poor student writing is viewed as a problem. There is very little room for pedagogy in this method. It is more about standards which must be internalised.

Tutors provide "external" feedback which is internalised, in line with social constructivist theories (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006: 201):

The student also actively constructs his or her own understanding of feedback messages derived from external sources (Black & Wiliam, 1998). This is consistent with the literature on student-centred and social constructivist conceptions of learning (Palincsar, 1998; Lea et al., 2003).

This process can be affected by the quality of the feedback. Building on the well-known national student surveys (particularly in the UK-HEFCE, 2011) that indicate dissatisfaction with feedback, Nicol (2010) argues that there is inconsistency amongst teachers in the quality

and content of their feedback. There are differences in standards or interpretation of criteria between tutors.

This is so important when students have been shown to place great importance on feedback (Hounsell, et al., 2008). In the analysis of the efficacy of feedback, or disciplinary literacy more generally, problems in uptake are most often placed in the lap of the student, and perhaps the student's characteristics, or background (Nolen, 2011), when part of the understanding of dysfunction should look at the wider system of overlapping learning contexts (i.e. tutor variation) that affect university study and the underlying culture which they represent.

It is common to see assessment and feedback for a class as the responsibility of the tutor, acting alone. However, these functions are "embedded in social systems" (Nolen, 2011: 320). There are overlapping contexts wherein the classroom is a part of the institution, and also the discipline. These can all implicitly or explicitly affect the way that a tutor assesses students' work.

Where students lack the ability to interpret feedback, it is possible that academic culture may be to blame. The feedback, coming from a disciplinary expert of a kind, is also laden with a sense of disciplinary culture that the student may not be aware of (Woodward-Kron, 2007). That means to say that the feedback about genre writing might be as culture-laden as the genre itself, such that it is hard for a student to interpret. For example, a tutor's advice such as "be explicit" can be misinterpreted as to the implications for writing, and the way in which the student is expected to act (Lillis, 1999:130f).

Nevertheless, it has been shown that constructive feedback, in order to scaffold learning, must be clearly understandable (see Lee, 2014). Poulos & Mahoney's (2008) study examined students' opinions, and defines effective feedback as that which is understandable to a specific student. The assessments then form a part of the culture of the class as the tutor uses them as a means for teaching students (Nolen, 2011: 323). However, that requires pedagogical expertise (Nolen, 2011: 323) so that it fits into a program of student development. For this to occur, there needs to be knowledge about students' literacy processes, including communication with tutors.

2.3.5 Communicating feedback

According to Russell et al. (2009), British tertiary study some years ago tended to include one-to-one tutorials that included writing tutelage. In such tutorials, it would have been easier to discover how the student interprets the feedback through dialogue to check his or her comprehension (Prior, 1998). Nicol (2010) cites Laurillard's (2002) conversational teaching and learning framework, claiming that dialogue can bridge the usual gaps between student and teacher understanding of assessment criteria and feedback. This is controversial due to the prevailing attitude of student independence.

With wider participation and modularisation have also ensured that dialogue has ceased to be common. Literacy dialogue has been replaced by summative feedback on formal assessment documentation that places much weight on the tutor to express sufficiently salient literacy concepts in a monologue format (Sadler, 2010 and Poulos & Mahoney, 2008). In order for this to happen, feedback must be both "more informative and diagnostic" as part of a process-oriented writing pedagogy (Lee, 2014). This means that tutors need to take this new dynamic into consideration when providing summative advice. However, much recent research has shown that students generally feel that they require more, and clearer feedback (Poulos & Mahoney, 2008).

In an environment where literacy is not taught directly, one could claim that (post-assessment) feedback is a place where "experienced members of the discourse community frame the discipline's discursive practices for novice participants" (Woodward-Kron, 2004: 142). Feedback is more than a socialising of the student (Woodward-Kron, 2004).

It is about communication between people. Quantitatively, feedback has been shown to be beneficial for performance (Bell & Orgnero, 2011). However, at an emotional level, the receipt of feedback can trigger negative responses (Bell & Orgnero, 2011). Perhaps this is due to the risk that students take in writing, when the criteria for good writing are not sufficient for target writing to be transparent. This can create an angry response as well. Therefore, feedback needs to be crafted carefully so as to not be "degrading or threatening" (Bell & Orgnero, 2011: 47), and instead, encourage growth.

However, a monologue does not allow for the student to question the feedback message, if it is not understood. Student learning is not about transferring knowledge to passive students (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006: 200). By giving the feedback to a student, a tutor is expecting that student to interpret those words as advice on how to write in a specific way. The language

itself has pedagogical intent. It tends to be more indirect (Zamel & Spack, 1998), as regards the specific words to be written by a student, and more complex than simply giving students “the right answer.” This can create some difficulty, as research has shown.

Students often lack awareness of the discourse of the field and even the discourse of assessment (including feedback and tasks, Lillis, 2001): “Yet despite the teachers’ best efforts to make the disclosure full, objective and precise, many students do not understand it appropriately because ... they are not equipped to decode the [feedback] statements properly,” (Sadler, 2010: 539, see also Abasi & Graves, 2008). They may lack “the tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1962) necessary to identify the feature of their work to which some part of the feedback refers,” (Sadler, 2010: 540). Therefore, feedback is pedagogic and so reflection is one method by which a tutor can improve the usefulness of their feedback.

2.3.6 Formative assessment as literacy teaching

If feedback, in university pedagogy, is still seen as an issue of teaching, and not one of student development, the classroom educational context is lacking a community concept of literacy. With summative feedback, there are limited opportunities for community-type learning of literacy. The lack of classroom time means that there are limited opportunities for students as a group to request further explanations, in the context of the course. Assuming availability, a student could visit a tutor to ask questions, but the rest of the class cannot be party to this literacy exchange.

Firstly, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006: 200) believe that students could co-opt advice messages within a learner-centred, socially-constructed approach to university education. They claim that this will make students more successful and independent learners. This requires a re-conceptualisation of the capabilities of students. Indeed, students have been shown to understand the connection between “good marks on assessments ... [and] thinking critically and understanding the subject,” (Hounsell, et al., 2008: 58).

This could be realised through formative feedback occurring during the writing process. It can best be designed to indicate a gap in a student’s written performance, while transmitting the values and hoped-for standards (Taras, 2005, Nolen, 2011), rather than having students and the tutor having divergent goals. In so doing, there should also be an indication of methods that a student could use to rectify the gap (Ramaprasad, 1983).

Formative feedback could be coupled with literacy instruction through greater classroom engagement with genre and reflection on writing and feedback. Carless (2006), Hattie & Timperley have noticed how feedback and instruction could be unified: “when feedback is combined with more a correctional review, the feedback and instruction become intertwined” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007: 82). Thompson (2012: 90) would view this as a “developmental dialogue.” This would show students that writing is a developmental process rather than a necessity whose sole purpose is the completion of assessment.

Similarly, Hounsell et al. (2008) found 6 possible points (in the writing process) at which tutors could provide guidance to students, through feedback. Each writing task can be seen as a cycle with intervention points, where tutors can advise students. In a similar way, Hattie & Timperley’s (2007) meta-analysis on previous feedback studies expressed some of these feedback stages in question form: ‘How am I going?’ ‘Where am I going’ and ‘Where to next’. The last stage includes knowledge which can feed-forward to the next assessment (see also Nolen, 2011), as the student progresses on a plotted path to disciplinary literacy. That requires both student and teacher strategies (Kulhavy, 1977 in Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Particularly, this arrangement of advice points can be planned (Pokorny & Pickford, 2010). This is one way for a discipline to help students consciously build on their literacy appropriation (Pokorny & Pickford, 2010). However, this can be complicated by the range of different assessment types (Nolen, 2011, Nesi & Gardner, 2012) between classroom groups.

Writing exemplars could also help in this process (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006: 208). However, exemplars are still viewed critically, (Hounsell et al., 2008: 61), as being too much help. There is fear expressed that students would reduce exemplars to formulaic answers, or simply copy the format. This indicates a fear of a superficial student engagement with writing. It may also be that such tutors are expressing the belief that students must learn to write through assessment, and concurrent with their acquisition of content knowledge through a tutor-led process, without literacy models, relying only on post-hoc feedback.

That can be interpreted to mean that tutors believe that their assessment tasks are within the realm of the achievable. That is founded on many tutors’ belief that “their [tutors’] expectations of academic work were relatively self-evident, that their feedback comments were transparent in their meaning and import, or that students would know how to remedy any shortcomings identified,” (Hounsell et al., 2008: 56). This has been shown to be a questionable belief.

Scriven believes that formative feedback can only be called so if the advice is incorporated into a student’s literacy knowledge (Scriven, 1967 in Taras, 2005) through reflection. There is

a body of proof showing that uptake can be affected by a lack of understanding of feedback (Ivanič et al. 2000, Gibbs & Simpson, 2003 in Pokorny & Pickford, 2010).

This gap in knowledge could be bridged by educating tutors about ways to teach a genre. The ‘New Rhetorical’ approach (Russell et al. 2009: 410) teaches, explicitly, aspects of genre, but also the “logic of communication in terms of the logic of the learning/disciplinary activity—the ‘why’ and ‘where’ and ‘when’ of a genre as well as the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of it.” A study which looked at students’ impressions of just such a programme showed that it increased students’ confidence (Carter et al. in Russell et al., 2009). As mentioned before, tutors, if willing, are often limited by time constraints to teaching literacy through feedback.

2.3.7 Students’ views of feedback

In any such feedback process, it is also necessary to understand how students view the feedback process. Following Mory’s call that student opinions should be sought that reveal students’ cognitive and affective processes regarding feedback, the study in Poulos & Mahoney (2008) collected data from a student focus group. Students’ perceptions indicate that feedback is a complex phenomenon that is viewed differently by different students. This means that students have different preferences for certain types of feedback style (e.g. detailed, or general). Due to massification, such preferences are often not catered for.

The expression of non-traditional students’ opinions of feedback is often more important, as Poulos & Mahoney claim that marginal students may base their future in tertiary education on such literacy support:

The less students believe in themselves the more explicit and frequent feedback they require (Knight & Yorke 2003). This is emphasized in a survey of non-completion students, which identified the quality of learning experience as an important factor in their decision to withdraw at the end of first year, thus emphasizing the importance of constructive feedback at this critical time (Yorke, 2003) (Poulos & Mahoney, 2008: 144)

Therefore, the more successfully that tutors can incorporate feedback into regular cycles of contextualised literacy work, the better it would be for students. It would also lessen, in the long term, the perceived “dependency” on tutors, and indeed increase student power within the discipline.

2.4 Disciplinary literacy appropriation

Disciplinary courses have their own objectives that include the projected outcomes for students. Students are required to learn certain content and produce the required written work. Since the classroom is an educational environment (as opposed to a professional one), the writing of students is reproductive, rather than productive. Students construct their knowledge of content (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2001) through the writing of facsimiles of professional (i.e. academic discipline) texts, but they often do so without formal instruction, but rather through a “tacit apprenticeship” (Russell, 1995:21) with a local agent of the genre (i.e. the tutor). This lack of direction makes student coursework writing an occluded genre (Swales, 1996 in Gardner & Nesi, 2013). However, some have problematised the role of writing in this system due to the lack of writing guidance. It is this contradiction which drives my research study.

If the activity system of a classroom is viewed from a different perspective, Russell et al. (2009: 397) show how the gap in expectations about writing involves a lack of knowledge, on the part of students about genre. This often exists in the aspects of writing such as epistemology, authority and contestation.

Russell (1995: 25f) believes that (in the US), universities need to have the tacit, embedded and indirect nature of disciplinary writing laid bare. “Through naturalistic research methods and discourse analysis, one may trace the dialectical appropriating of object/motives and tools, including written genres,” and connect them with “microsocial interactions.” (Russell, 1997). In other words, genre must be studied in context.

Russell (1997) notes that students have reasons for being motivated about appropriating the language that is needed for successful writing: “students ... appropriate the discursive tools (and genres) of a discipline or profession, because those involvements, those affiliations, can yield greater power, agency, and identity”; what Russell calls “empowerment.” Students move from a position of weakness to one of power and independence, through their interactions in the discipline. This shows how a student can be transformed by the search for knowledge.

It could be said that as students progress and acquire aspects of genre, they can edge towards the centre of the disciplinary community, and can thus use a more authoritative presentation of opinion, or voice (Hyland, 2002c).

While any discipline’s genre is an ever-changing historically-situated communicative tool, linguists have recently begun to describe some qualities of particular genres through the use of

corpus studies. Those studies usually assess the qualities of professional (i.e. academic) genre writing (Hyland, 1998, 2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c), most commonly drawn from journal articles. These studies have tried to describe and explain the linguistic choices evident in genre writing.

Less such research work has been done on student writing (BAWE corpus- Nesi & Gardner, 2012). The BAWE corpus is a database of tertiary student essays, from various disciplines. These are high-scoring essays, and so the privileged norms of student writing can now be understood. Being that this is a corpus, the data are decontextualised from the classroom setting, the classroom subject and the tutor's input.

Nevertheless, a comparison of such studies of professional and student writing has shown that there is a clear distinction between the two, in any genre due to the different expectations placed on the writer by their respective community, or context. The professional (e.g. tutors) and student writers are, when writing, part of two different systems; the professional and the educational. Professional writing is moderated by panels of peers. Student writing is moderated by tutors. Professional writing is produced to advance theory or to reveal research findings, while student writing tasks are designed, by tutors, to ascertain learning, by reviewing findings.

The student writer is also expected to have a more modest voice (Hyland, 2002c). A student is much less apt, and less expected, to write with authority, for example. Authority is a stance taken by a writer that places him/herself as an expert in their field. This can be represented by using the word "clearly", for example, to boost the strength of an opinion (Cottrell, 2013).

Due to the variety of tasks, and the uniqueness demanded of writing, a genre provides the user with a sense of what is acceptable, but not a prescriptive list of phrases. So, while such genre studies can reveal genre habits, it cannot necessarily be used in a decontextualised manner to teach students how to represent their understanding of content knowledge. It also cannot provide an answer to all types of future writing, in a historically-situated discipline.

The genre is not always understood as being a genre by students. This may be because it is not explicitly labelled so, or because students are not able to understand the logic behind, and the patterns of the genre. This genre is used to express the meaning that a writer wishes to convey. However, meanings are contested, and therefore this makes a genre still more difficult to express appropriately.

The stability of a genre is challenged also by the nature of contributions to that genre. Each text which is accepted into the professional canon is expected to be a unique contribution to the knowledge and is to be written using novelty in the choice of language, to some degree, by virtue of its novelty. The regulations against plagiarism and misrepresentation are directed at assuring this unique nature. The unique nature of a text and the requirement for novelty place the emphasis on advanced knowledge of the discipline itself and its genre. Whether the student is learning content through the act of writing (or creating new knowledge, in the case of the tutor), this complex work does not often occur in the classroom.

Though the focus of group learning of content and literacy seems to be the classroom, most HSS assessment essay tasks are completed by the student, individually, through private study. The process of practising literacy is, in this sense, often seen as a solitary activity. The part played by the classroom system is often limited to individual post hoc task feedback, and any other advice. This feedback, individualised information about the genre, is important for reflection on a completed task. There is also the implication that some of the knowledge gained by a student from feedback will be used for future tasks.

The perception of the solitary nature of literacy work means that the student's characteristics must play a central role in the production of an essay. A student's literacy capabilities are related to the student's history of writing in that discipline (e.g. a previous writing task), and their experience with the type of task (Hounsell, et al., 2008) or the topic (Latif, 2013).

A contributing factor to capabilities is agency. Each student uses a task in a way chosen by that student. They can have their own motivation behind a particular literacy task. Since university students are adults, they are more able to reflect on their writing, and are also more directed toward their goals.

The activity of writing is the place where students learn the most about literacy. This is where students can take post hoc feedback as feed-forward (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006) and write the next essay. That task gives them the opportunity to negotiate the meaning of their disciplinary content, and use their perception of their genre and their relevant literacy experience. While it is widely accepted that university studies are social learning, literacy appropriation should be as well.

Literacy work has most often been perceived as a student's private cognitive work and scholarship, apart from the disciplinary community. This is not the case. Students, as they write, are presenting, and reflecting on their learning of disciplinary content. In a wider sense, student

are using their classroom lessons and sources of knowledge (i.e. books) that had been created for the community of their discipline. In both instances, students are implicitly interacting in a kind of community dialectic (Engeström, 1987, Russell, 1997: 504) through the “mediational tool” of the genre.

Despite the implied strong links with the disciplinary community, students are not allowed to regurgitate the form of received knowledge in their demonstration of learning. A writing task requires the creation of a new formulation of that received knowledge. This could be expressed as expansive learning (Engeström, 1987). This belies the creativity required for tertiary disciplinary writing to make a personal text in a genre, yet include judicious use of the disciplinary knowledge derived from study of disciplinary experts’ texts. This is why appropriation is a more defensible theory of educational outcomes. Appropriation does not imply repetition, but instead the use of a tool (e.g. a genre)(Wegerif, 2008).

In this way of thinking, students develop a degree of independence by having a “history of interactions with the system.” (Russell, 1997: 19). In turn, the tutor and classroom activity can have an “invisible” effect (Vygotsky, 1978) on the literacy work through the task, advice and feedback given, and lectures. This independence may be the motivator behind the assessment system in universities. There are many methods that students could use to actively seek to acquire a genre, including through essay-feedback cycles.

However, as mentioned, students often write essays without knowledge of the mediational tool (genre rules/habits/criteria), or how their tutors will interpret those rules. This can lead to frustration that mitigates against feedback being accepted. Formative feedback can be instead the pro-active teaching of assessment and literacy that would help alleviate the frustration of “trial-and-error learning” (Sadler, 1989:120, Taras, 2005).

2.4.1 Aspects of disciplinary literacy

A disciplinary genre is a means of representing particular epistemic concepts that are tied to knowledge creation and promulgation in that discipline. The areas of epistemology, authority and contestation are three of the most complex aspects of disciplinary writing that students need to acquire (Russell et al., 2009: 397). They are directly linked to knowledge construction (Baynam & Prinsloo, 2001) meaning that they are central to successful content learning and assessment. There are other more general aspects of scholarship, like organisation of text and use of sources (intertextuality), which must also be understood for effective writing.

Disciplinary writing, even that by students, is a type of disciplinary communication. This communication can best be expressed in the term intertextuality, which appears in many forms. Student writing is therefore not a solitary activity. Intertextuality exists in the task sheet with which a tutor sets the students' task. This 'initiating' text (Prior, 1998: 173), although it does not indicate specifically the way in which an essay is to use a genre, it plays a large role in the shaping of a student's essay. This is due to the fact that students need to understand what the tutor has set as the goal for the assessment through interpreting the task instructions.

Intertextuality is expected to be a process by which arguments are created. The student needs to weave in disciplinary content derived from source texts (Prior, 1998: 174), as a form of disciplinary communication. Appropriate use of sources indicates a student's awareness of academic writing style, intertextuality (e.g. citation) and rules regarding plagiarism, amongst other (implicit) pedagogical goals. One such goal is the critical analysis of sources, called intertextual tracing. Critically presenting sources is a fundamental to argument and goes beyond description or repetition. This analysis helps students write and form arguments, which helps them express their stance towards a topic; their voice. Voice is a concept which is included in students' process of developing an identity as an author (Abasi & Graves, 2008).

Much less perceptible is the concept of texts as dialogic partners (Prior, 2004). It asserts that a person learns to read through social activity. The texts that a person has read, or written, whether they are academic or not, affect the way that that person approaches later texts, and how that person writes about them (Prior, 1998: 184). In other words, phrases words and argumentation styles are learned from our personal culture (see multi-literacies above). This is a way of understanding the culture of the university that could aid literacy development.

However, for some students, particularly those who do not have a family background of university attendance, there is difficulty in having a sense of the dialogue or experience in participating in such a dialogue. For them, English academic voice is often a difficult concept to acquire (Lillis, 2001). For some, it is difficult to see that lexical constructions can actually represent a student's voice. Other aspects of self-representation, such as disallowing personal pronouns ("I"), can also confuse. Such students are the ones who require an education in the above aspects of literacy. This is a crucial reason for studying students' appropriation processes.

2.5 Methods of studying literacy appropriation

If students are to appropriate a genre, their processes could reveal something about their resources and their difficulties: “With this growing interest in and acceptance of genre as fundamental to writing, the question of how individuals build knowledge of genres becomes crucial” (Tardy 2006:80). This is an important driver of my study.

There are many ways of studying tertiary writing through empirical research. Most have used qualitative methods, predominantly interviews. Tardy (2006) produced a compendium of such studies from different disciplines. From these studies, she created a model of genre knowledge. The studies were of both classroom writing and “practice” (outside of classrooms) environments. The practice studies employed periodic interviews for data gathering, with individual students who were in the process of writing a task. However, these studies did not typically observe writing activity in real time, or study the thought processes of writers in groups.

Tardy’s (2009) own literacy research enquired about this through student interviews from which she created her categories of *genre knowledge* (see also Gentil, 2011: 8). She claims that these have not been tested in real-time observation, and are thus only a heuristic. In other words, students while writing, do not consciously label their knowledge. As presented above, there are theories that claim that what is called “knowledge” is only the ability to use a tool, with literacy being one such tool.

However, these four categories of genre knowledge (Tardy, 2009) are helpful in trying to describe what aspects of literacy students may be negotiating in their writing activities:

- 1) Process 2) rhetorical 3) formal 4) subject-matter

Tardy asserts that genre writing is more complex than four separate categories would indicate. A single written phrase can express concepts which are from more than one of the above categories.

These categories can be expressed in terms of language *competence* (Hymes, 1972), from the perspective of Ethnography of Communication. Gentil (2011) grouped Tardy’s categories under two sub-categories of competence: *knowledge* and the ability to *use* that knowledge. Tardy’s (2009) genre knowledge is said to have two categories for each competence sub-category. *Literacy use* represents both Tardy’s *process* knowledge, which is required for the

process of building a text using a genre, and *rhetorical* knowledge, which shows a sense of the genre's intended purpose and an awareness of persuasion in writing.

Tardy's two text-based categories are *formal* knowledge (lexicogrammatical conventions) and *subject-matter* knowledge. Formal knowledge shows the importance of grammar in making writing understood. There is a growing recognition of the importance of subject-matter knowledge and its interrelationship with the development of literacy (Tardy, 2006). That is in line with multiliteracies theorists (Cope & Kalantzis). While this provides a good framework for student literacy, it is important to note that these literacy categories were not derived from observation, such that genre knowledge is not being reified.

Disciplinary literacy can be examined through the study of essay drafts to assess intertextuality. That would mean studying how a student has worked the ideas of others into his or her essay. However, Prior (2004) mentions that most writers are, at best, only partially aware of the debts they owe to intertextual and intercontextual influences. That means that researchers will be even less likely to discover these aspects of writing's hidden dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981 in Prior, 1998:183). It is, however, possible to see the process of intertextuality if a writing activity is observed in real time.

A textual study of students' writing could examine the students' genre knowledge. However, it would require a researcher who knows the local genre well, both professionally, and as a linguist to provide a nuanced, contextualised explanation. Nevertheless, the analysis of a written essay only indicates the result of a literacy process, and not the literacy process itself.

A study of literacy appropriation is a study of the activity of writing in context. A lone writer could be observed, but it would require intervention to understand more about the literacy process. However, if a group were studied, the group discussion would make some thought processes and genre capabilities become more visible (Mercer, 1995). Such research could show what the literacy processes of students says about the role of disciplinary culture. In this, the tutor's expectations are important.

Students' writing could be assessed in relation to the tutor's expectations. This is why the local tutor's expectations of and perspective on genre are so important. In a localised view of genre (Gimenez, 2012), the arbiter of whether students are using the genre is the tutor. This tutor has access to the genre, but also knows implicitly what to expect from students as far as their use of the genre (known as community standards- McCarthy, 1987). However, the tutor, as local agent, often does not make the genre goals explicit (McCarthy, 1987) when s/he sets

the assessment task (within the disciplinary and university contexts and constraints), and assesses the resulting texts. Since this is the perception of literacy that students use as a point of reference, this local genre will be the operational genre in my study.

The tutor can make her/his genre preferences known to the class through the task instructions, classroom discussion of the task, through regular lessons, and through post hoc feedback. A study of this process could have consisted mainly of student literacy as viewed by a tutor. There is however the danger of assessing students' processes through the perspective of the tutor. That would be a normative analysis of students' literacy knowledge, wherein, by reading tutor feedback (e.g. through interviews), it is possible to draw some conclusions about whether the students had met the norms of their genre. My study is not centrally concerned with normative standards, but instead the students' contextualised path to those standards, as set by a tutor.

Student perceptions and the use of tutor contributions are important to understanding literacy work in an essay task cycle. This aids in describing the way that the participants operationalise literacy or create their text the tutor as a guide. The tutor's summative assessment also aids in understanding how the students' completed literacy work is viewed by the local genre agent. Then, in turn, views of students about this assessment, and how they see it affecting their literacy processes, sense of genre and approach to assessment.

A student's writing processes can be examined in the context of a disciplinary class, or of a writing (support) class. Tardy (2006:97) claims that writing teachers seek insight into how students apply writing skills derived from the classroom. However, it may not be possible to determine the source of a student's writing ability, unless the source is explicitly revealed, in activity. Therefore, a study needs to examine how group work would provide an opportunity for the exchange of writing skills amongst peers.

It is important to witness genre use "in natural environments" (Tardy, 2006:82) such as the classroom. Writing activity could occur in the normal course of events in a discipline class. However, this is not the normal course of events for tertiary essay writing. This is usually viewed as a tool for individual assessment only (Tsui, 1996). Some of that writing occurs in class examinations, while the coursework essay is most often assigned as homework.

This is an example of how the literacy boundaries between school and other learning environments are blurred (Hull & Schultz, 2001). My research is being considered as part of the out-of-school literacy. This burgeoning field, which is based mostly on NLS ethnographic methods, has made some "major theoretical advances in how we conceptualize literacy," (Hull

& Schultz 2001: 577-578). This new perspective realises that a tutor need not be present for literacy work to occur.

Out-of-school literacy takes a perspective from Scribner and Cole which states that practice is “a recurrent, goal-directed sequence of activities using a particular technology and particular systems of knowledge” (p. 236 in Hull & Schultz 2001: 584). This places importance on the role of the goal (an essay) in an activity.

Coursework-essay writing, as an integral purposeful task, is most often assigned as an individual homework task, with a long period over which to complete the writing and ancillary activities. Such essays require students to search out source texts from which appropriate information can be cited and incorporated into a text. In so doing, students are forcing the use and improvement of their literacy skills. It is for this reason that my study followed students as they worked together outside the classroom.

Lillis (2001) used a number of methods which she classes as ethnographic (students’ texts, interviews discussing those texts, students’ literacy history, students’ research diaries- Lillis, 2008). She took an emic perspective, meaning that she was led by the students’ interpretation of literacy issues. Lillis claims that the student’s perspective on literacy experiences was central to a better, more contextualised understanding of student writing. This macro perspective is important.

Tardy (2006:84) found interactions and discussions with peers to be influential in students’ writing, as did Casanave (1995). However, these studies used interviews of participants about their impression of the work they were doing, during the period in which they were writing, while often not in real-time, i.e. concurrent with periods of writing actions. It would be important to focus on those interactions and draw from them the possible impacts on literacy of those, for the participants, as my study hoped to do.

The use of peer work in literacy research is common, in L2-English classes (Storch, 2005). However, when students are each writing their own individual essays (convergent tasks, separate documents), the class work is usually limited to preparatory work and editing (or peer review) stages (Storch, 2005). In these sorts of peer review processes, one drawback is that the focus of feedback commentary is most often on the product and not the process of writing (Storch, 2005), and the feedback tends to be superficial (e.g. at sentence-level).

Collaborative writing, i.e. a group writing one task document, has been shown to be more productive with both L1 and L2 English students (Storch, 2005). It has been shown to encourage reflective thinking, and the defending and explaining of ideas, as well as discussion of discourse, rather than simply grammar. This is indicative of deeper learning. However, there is still an undercurrent of reluctance to write together in classrooms (Storch, 2005, see also Peretz, 2003).

Despite the group nature of collaborative writing, the focus of such studies has been on individual processes and on the language of discussion, rather than the writing process (Storch, 2005). The triangulation processes also tend to consist of surveys about attitudes towards group work, in general. What would be better is an interview after an activity, discussing the activity of collaborative writing (Storch, 2005). This would provide a contextualised view of literacy activity.

Recent, interview-based “dialogic” ethnographic research on literacy (Lillis & Scott, 2008) has studied issues such as the gap in student knowledge regarding a disciplinary genre. This type of recollection data also may be useful in a study of literacy. However, there is a push towards making literacy research, and particularly NLS, more relevant to the classroom experience (Larson & Marsh, 2005).

This can be solved by observing literacy work (in the manner of micro ethnography -Edwards & Mercer, 1987: 16) that looks at a chosen social setting. Gentil (2011) and Tardy (2009: 85) both claim that tertiary literacy needs to be tested through observation. It is clear that observation research would provide indications of whether Tardy’s categories are represented in the “interaction” and “practices” of students. It would also be important to see how those categories inter-related in complex discourse. Indeed, my study supports the belief that the task creates the opportunity to realise literacy, or genre awareness.

The task gives the incentive to discuss literacy issues, due the nature of tertiary writing. An empirical study of writing could take the form of an observation of students’ writing processes, in real time. The discourse could be examined, but in a contextualised manner. The discourse of a literacy discussion would be not merely a series of turns, it can found that the discourse is an attempt to build common understanding of an issue. This would provide some empirical evidence of externalised thought processes and possibly appropriation processes (Donato, 1994).

This is why a study of students' use of language, within literacy work, could provide a view of students' genre capabilities as they are being applied to their essay task. When students are asked to write an assessment task, it has a bearing on their success in degree studies, meaning that literacy work would be performed under pressure. This is the context of most tertiary literacy appropriation processes. It is necessary to find a theoretical framework that can express such contextualised activity.

What is required is a framework that does not separate knowing and doing, and activity from its context (Leont'ev, 1978). Russell (1997) clearly explained the inappropriacy of many other forms of research for studying university literacy. He described how constructivism and social constructionism are plagued by Cartesian dualism in that they separate knowing and doing. In Activity Theory, (Nardi, 1996) it is asserted that there is no separation between applied and pure components of a discipline. They are one and the same. The next section will assess a theoretical construct that would allow for the analysis of real-time, contextualised student literacy work that studies knowing and doing.

2.6 Sociocultural Theory and Activity Theory

This section will describe the ontology and epistemology of SCT/AT and explain its applicability to literacy research. The founding proponents of SCT in 1930s Russia were Vygotsky (1978), Leont'ev (1978), and Luria (1976). SCT/AT has a foundation in a form of social psychology, in opposition to cognitive psychology. It has been used in research in many social science fields, such as education (Engeström, 1999) because of its value in studying change processes.

SCT/AT is not a complete theory of psychological research, but rather an umbrella term for a broadly unified epistemological and ontological position on research (Chaiklin, 1993). SCT/AT is classed as a social-constructivist theory that focuses on actions more than the results of activity. First-generation Activity Theory (Leont'ev, 1978) was a continuation of most precepts in SCT, and thus has the same philosophical bases as SCT, and they are often mentioned together. Therefore I may often use the combined form of SCT/AT, when the differences between AT and SCT are not of importance. However, AT is an activity-based analytical system that can be employed for the study of complex contextualised processes due to how it views activity.

This review will follow a path through SCT, moving on to Leont'ev's (1978) AT work and then proceed to some of the advances of Engeström (1987, 1999, 2001), where I will solidify the version of AT that I will use, discussing many of the key advances in AT from Engeström.

2.6.1 SCT/AT and joint activity

The basis of SCT/AT is its perspective on psychology and the epistemology of researching phenomena. Firstly, the perspective on psychology is derived from Marxist philosophy which is said to have a concrete psychological theory of consciousness (Engeström, 1987). Further to that, it posits that consciousness is not qualitative, because it is a quality itself, meaning it can only exist, or not exist. This is claimed to be incongruent with standard cognitive psychological theory (Vygotsky, 1978).

In AT, emphasis is on activity as the unit of analysis, which reflects its epistemology. This is in contrast to behaviourism and cognitive psychology. In contrast to both materialism, which sees things as an object of contemplation, and the idealism of Feuerbach, SCT/AT includes human agency as an important facet of a research event.

Humans, at our stage of evolution, act within systems which contextualise activity (Vygotsky, 1978). Due to the social nature of psychology within AT, importance is given to the various physical and artificial (e.g. mental) tools used in activity that humans use to affect the world and themselves. Activity is not seen as reactions to the world, but as a system with its own structure, replete with transformations and development. These systems are also said to have their own history.

The higher order of human intellect, in SCT/AT, is the activity. The concept of activity was first posited by Marx, while Vygotsky also referred to it within SCT. However, Leont'ev, and thus AT, split from Vygotsky on the interpretation of activity. Leont'ev added to the concept of activity, with the role of the concept of joint collective activity as a factor in the research of activity (Engstrom, 1999). It is joint activity which allows for activity to be perceived in action and particularly the mediation which occurs. This makes group activity more complex and revealing than solitary activity which lacks an appreciation for the necessary activity systems which help define individuals (Roth, 2014). Any activity is said to be object-oriented, in that Leont'ev views activity as being directed toward an object.

Leont'ev (1978) notes that consciousness is found in humans' "process of the organization of work and social relations. Consciousness from the very beginning is a social product." We recognise from this that interaction in the social sphere is central to understanding consciousness. Further to that, learning, as an example of a social activity, affects the person and can change his/her processes, and consciousness.

From this, we can understand that when a student learns something new, such as an aspect of literacy, then they may undergo a change in how they deal with the work at hand, and the social relations between themselves and the product of their activity, or between themselves and the teacher. Therefore changes can happen to a person who is being studied, as they apply themselves to an activity. This change could be understood as being a growth in understanding, which may lead to what is known as regulation (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, observing activity means observing change.

Therefore, since consciousness is in the background, in the "social conditions and modes of [an] activity" and in the "ideas that evoke, direct, and regulate the activity" (Leont'ev, 1978), then perhaps it is the regulation of activity which becomes significant in understanding what we call 'appropriation', in education. Perhaps, then, a researcher studying an appropriation process, can discover how external factors, like teaching or collaborative peer work, can change a student's regulation of their activity processes.

So, when students complete an essay task, they are not simply appropriating literacy, but also appropriating how to regulate such a writing process. Thus people can become independent learners by regulating their own version of the item they have sought to learn, instead of needing to be instructed. This seems to be where the educational stream of self-regulation theory gets its theoretical basis (see Butler & Winne, 1994).

A student acquires this new understanding by extrapolation. It may involve taking a lesson appropriated and extrapolating from that the knowledge to reproduce it the next time without external help. When newly-appropriated items are made explicit by the learner, the item is objectified, which means it can be reflected upon, as an 'object' (Leont'ev, 1978). That seems to be saying that this is a way that a person can begin to learn an item (e.g. a word, a process) and learn to extrapolate the way of replicating this activity themselves. However, there is nothing concrete in a mental construct. Learning might be perceived in the testing or use of an appropriated object, visible through external, social activity (Engeström, 1999).

In a university, this has specific interpretations, due to the prescribed interpretation of tertiary learning that persists, both in the object (subject content, writing) and in the independent learning methods which students are expected to apply. The expectation imposed by a university, historically, has been that it is a place where students are expected to become independent shapers of ideas.

Social activity itself has importance in any learning process (Leont'ev, 1978). A process has the social aspect, the means of completing the activity and the language which is used within these two phenomena. Firstly, an activity is inextricably linked to the social context. Therefore, in educational research, the variables in a teaching situation (involving issues such as mode, place, distance) affects how an item is appropriated. The means by which an activity is completed can have at least two interpretations in education. The thing which is being learned, which itself may be a process, may be distinguished from the process of learning how to repeat this activity once it is appropriated. For example, a student of writing may wish to learn an aspect of language, but may feel the requirement to learn how to use this knowledge in the future.

In activity, appropriation is said to be mediated. Mediation is the link between the participants and their context (Engeström, 2001). In social activity, the mediation can take many forms, chief among them being language. Whether it is the object of the lesson, or simply what is used to transmit an item, language is central to education. However, it is also central to consciousness. As Leont'ev (1978) asserts, language is a form of the existence of consciousness. In other words, it is not separate from consciousness. That means that language (verbally or in writing) which is used by a student in the process of appropriating writing, is both used to discuss the content of a course and also the language of presenting that content in an assessment essay (i.e. genre literacy).

Language is also used by a tutor when that tutor is engaged in students' literacy appropriation processes. A tutor can comment on a student's writing task, e.g. in a written mode, commonly called feedback. That act of writing comments is, at least in part, a pedagogical act and a use of language. This language represents the context from whence it came; the disciplinary genre & disciplinary pedagogy. The student can then perceive that language and it can affect that student in one of many ways. Therefore, at each stage of this process, language, in the form of disciplinary literacy, plays a role in that it represents consciousness and an object of the activity of studying, and it exists in the object, the writing.

Language, central to communication, is not simply a question of the meaning of words: “words, the language signs, are not simply replacements for things, or their conditional substitutes. Behind philological meanings is hidden social practice, activity transformed and crystallized in them,” (Leont’ev, 1978: 18). That means to say that words cannot be understood objectively, but only through the prism of the interpretation that someone gives to them, in a context. Therefore, consciousness is visible in everyday practices (Nardi, 1996).

With respect to students’ literacy processes, this opens up the possibility of studying the differences in the interpretation of a word, or words, between students, or between a student and a tutor. This can relate to perceptions of disciplinary writing and genre. For example, a feedback statement, from a tutor, is a product of disciplinary pedagogy. The feedback can mean one thing to a tutor, and another to a student. This difference could arise from the difference in their level of awareness of the discipline, and is thus situated in their histories as well. A tutor has much more experience of the use of disciplinary pedagogical words.

In the sphere of thought, as a form of consciousness, Leont’ev (1978) notes the relationship between internal thought and the outside world: “it has been demonstrated that internal thought processes are nothing other than the result of internalisation and specification of transformation of external practical activity.” That means to say that the acquisition of an item originates in the social sphere. The thought was the internalisation of an external stimulus. That interpretation of thought could be applied to the process of education. The things which we have learned were derived from an activity which may have been a classroom-related learning activity.

The learning process has its beginning in the external, social activity. This is followed by an internal activity, or internalising of learning (Leont’ev, 1978). However, the internal processes of a learner can also be seen through the understanding of motive, through observing activity. A cognitive activity is an internal activity that “serves a cognitive motive,” but could be made up of external (i.e. visible) actions. In other words, reading is a cognitive activity, with a cognitive motive, which is realised through an external process of examining the contents of a book.

As previously mentioned, actions are used to realise an object. This object can be formed during the action (Leont’ev, 1978). If this is applied to the study of processes of learning, actions could be studied to derive an understanding of a goal. However, the object of an action is not always clear. Therefore, it would be necessary to interview the research participant to

understand the goal of an activity from their perspective. As an aspect of a student's literacy development, perceiving a literacy goal is of interest to a researcher.

SCT/AT takes a perspective on activity that states it is historically- and culturally-situated. History plays a role in structured human activity that has existed (and been transformed) over a period of time (Leont'ev, 1978). For example, tertiary-level educational institutions have existed for hundreds of years as places of passing on knowledge to others. Some activities are conducted in certain ways because of the social and historical formation of the habits of a job, for instance a university tutor. This requires that the means and methods of an activity can be transmitted in an external form, in "a form of action or in the form of external speech." This has a direct relationship to education, which is about the process of 'transmitting' means and methods of learning, or, from the student's perspective, about appropriating knowledge, means methods and contextualised language.

This foundational work by Leont'ev means that AT is key to the examination of activity, and sees goal-oriented activity amongst a group as an expression of thought processes. In following Leont'ev's lead, Engeström had shown himself to be the proponent of expanding, clarifying and applying AT to research situations in order to build the theory and aspects of its applicability to real activity.

An activity can be depicted as an activity system, as in Figure 2, wherein any of the categories can come to represent one of the key factors in an activity. Engeström expanded upon the description of the structure of the human activity system heuristic (Engeström, 2001). This systems includes the key factors in activity (see above) which Engeström calls *categories* (or nodes) in the activity system, with most categories taken primarily from Leont'ev (1978, 1981) and Vygotsky (1978). Engeström, in an important progression from Leont'ev, attempts to clarify certain aspects of those categories which he had found to be incomplete, and Engeström then added to these categories. He did so to better explicate the role of social activity, using many of Marx's (1973) concepts, such as production. The next section will describe the categories and their importance to research.

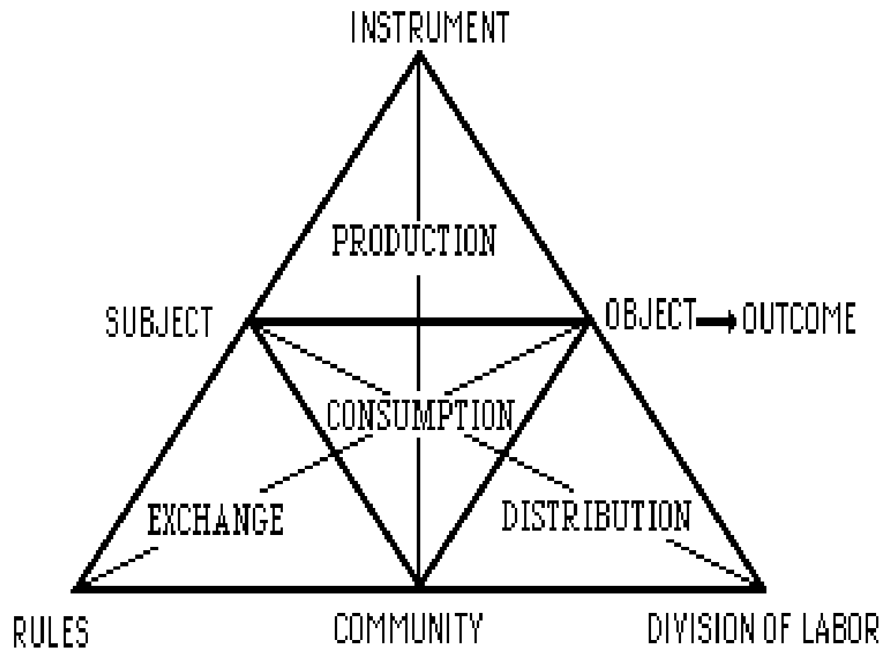


Figure 2 The structure of human activity (Engeström, 1987)

2.6.2 The activity system categories

For a human activity to be studied through AT, the factors in that activity could be explained using the activity system heuristic categories. The writing of a collaborative essay is studied as an activity, and not as a product. The phenomena which factor in activity, for this study are many, but this model helps in the comprehension of the dynamics of the contextualised activity of a group. This section will use the participants in my study as a general model for the categories (in capital letters). The activity system of my study will represent the participants' writing group (which will be explained more fully below).

The student group is the *Subject*, being that they are treated as persons operating within a group. The group is motivated by the external goal but also by the group's overall goals regarding the essay text, their group history, and the individuals' literacy histories, and their expression of agency. These personal and group factors will affect how the group uses their mediating tools (language) to perform the task (Lee, 2014).

Still, it is clear that students can surmount writing difficulties. Success can depend on many personal qualities, particularly personal agency (Cumming, 2006). While individual agency

can be rooted in past and present personal history (Kim, 2011), personal history itself changes over time as a student interacts (van Lier, 2000). A student's agency can be revealed through group activity, without a tutor. Students may feel freer to pursue their literacy needs and take the initiative. It is this initiative which can generate opportunities at expanding literacy awareness (Waring, 2011). Students may have a negative attitude towards writing in groups, and thus their agency may be expressed as a desire to write individually (Storch, 2005: 155).

Engeström (1999) expresses the concern that short-term activities may be too short for true agency (and motivation) to be revealed. This may have had a bearing on my study if I were studying a long-term process. However, in short-term activity it is possible to see some indications of agency from participants as they engage in literacy work. In other words, my study cannot easily see a participant's agency regarding how literacy (or a writing task) fits into their overall process as students. However, it can indicate agency regarding how the literacy task and its components are interpreted and approached.

The literacy group uses a set of real *Tools* (e.g. computers) and psychological *Tools*, which could best be described as the student's awareness of disciplinary writing, to complete the essay task. Student's psychological tools can include tutor feedback.

Classroom groups are often organised around an *Object* which could be described as learning, or as the assessment of learning. Participants work together and are "oriented towards something and driven by something," (Engeström & Escalante, 1996: 360). That is the *Object*; it brings them together for purposes of work in "continuous, collective activity systems with their motives" (Ibid). It is "slippery" and "transitional" and "manifests itself in different form for different participants," (Ibid). It is the meeting of assessment standards (subsuming disciplinary writing norms) that is a visible motivator for students. A disciplinary degree is a larger motivator, but does not have a direct effect on every assessment task.

The short-term *Outcome* is an essay draft, though it can be seen how the long-term *Object* can be transformed into a short-term outcome. These outcomes, because of their arising from the *Object*, are said to be a transformation of the object into an *Outcome* (Basharina, 2007). This *Outcome* then also changes the *Object*. In education, *Outcome* are very often represented by assessment tasks. The literacy work is part of their *Object* (the classroom group) that transforms their classroom work (subject content) into an *Outcome*. This transformation process can be presented as the basis of a micro case study (Stahl et al., 2006), as in my study.

The *Community* is an explanation of the contextual layers around the activity that can have an effect on the group's work. The writing group is part of a disciplinary class because the particular class is the learning context, and unique as regards its workings and object (compared with other classes in a degree program). The group's task is set by the classroom leader, the tutor. The students must meet the requirements of the tutor who represents (and is thus affected by) the department (which is itself in a professional context within a university), through assessment.

There is also within that community a set of written (and perhaps unwritten) *Rules* including what writing is, in that discipline. These are usually tacit qualitative parameters that can be used selectively to judge an essay. These rules, in that community, tend to be represented in some form by each tutor, as the local genre expert, disciplinary representative, and representative of the university. The tutor is directly and indirectly affected in judgements by the university disciplinary department within which work occurs (that provides historically-situated disciplinary writing norms and rules for the task). The institution also plays a role. Indeed, "ACLITS [academic literacy] research [shows] that beyond the individual teacher's classroom, institutional pressures circumscribe and define what can be written," (Russell et al., 2009: 413). The university sets rules of behaviour and standards for writing (e.g. plagiarism). The university in this study is an Anglophone, British university which has its own historical trajectory and influence on all activity within its domain.

Production is the process of creating something. In this study it will come to represent the production of the writing task. This is described as the event itself and what occurs. There is a role to be played by the place and time when the work occurs, and how it occurs.

Consumption, within tertiary academic writing, could represent the student's learning process, part of which could be represented in the written task. The student consumes knowledge about the subject(s) of study, about how to behave in the community, including how to write. This is a key process, since Engeström (1987) notes that writing cannot simply be learned by participating in the activity of working. A student actively learns from personal actions such as reading, research, and the studying of feedback.

The *Division of Labour* in this community represents the typical workings of a human activity system. In my study, there are two types of actors, the students in the group, and the tutor. With direct and indirect teaching, including feedback, and exchanges possibly occurring between the tutor and student, the tutor can play a supporting role by providing advice on the task, or on

writing. The act of writing itself is a complex activity made of internal, as well as external actions. The external manifestations are planning, writing and editing and other actions shared by the group members.

This systemic view of activity is used for an epistemology which is concerned with change, as an object of study (Engeström, 2006). This is why activity is important. Activity provides an insight into the system. A motivator for education exists within activity systems, as they are constantly changing and contacting other activity systems. This can create contradictions within a system, or between systems.

The concept of the contradiction is not the same as that of a problem or conflict. A contradiction is a structural tension within the workings of a system (or between systems-Engeström, 2001). This motivates action. Contradictions, which Engeström (1999) considers to be significant motivators of change, can occur inside, or between, categories of a system, or between activity systems. For students, a primary contradiction may arise from a new type of task which they have never done before. The result may be a desire for action, or frustration; what Dayton calls breakdowns or innovations (Dayton, 2000). This type of change has a relationship with appropriation. Figure 3 shows four sources of tension, either within or between activity system categories (marked by bi-directional dotted lines a,b,c and d). One contradiction shown is within a category (a), while the other three (b-d) are between two categories (Li, 2013: 78), including one to do with the way the plagiarism *Rules* interact with the personal and task spaces of the *Object* (d). These tensions can lead to expansive learning, which is described below (2.6.3).

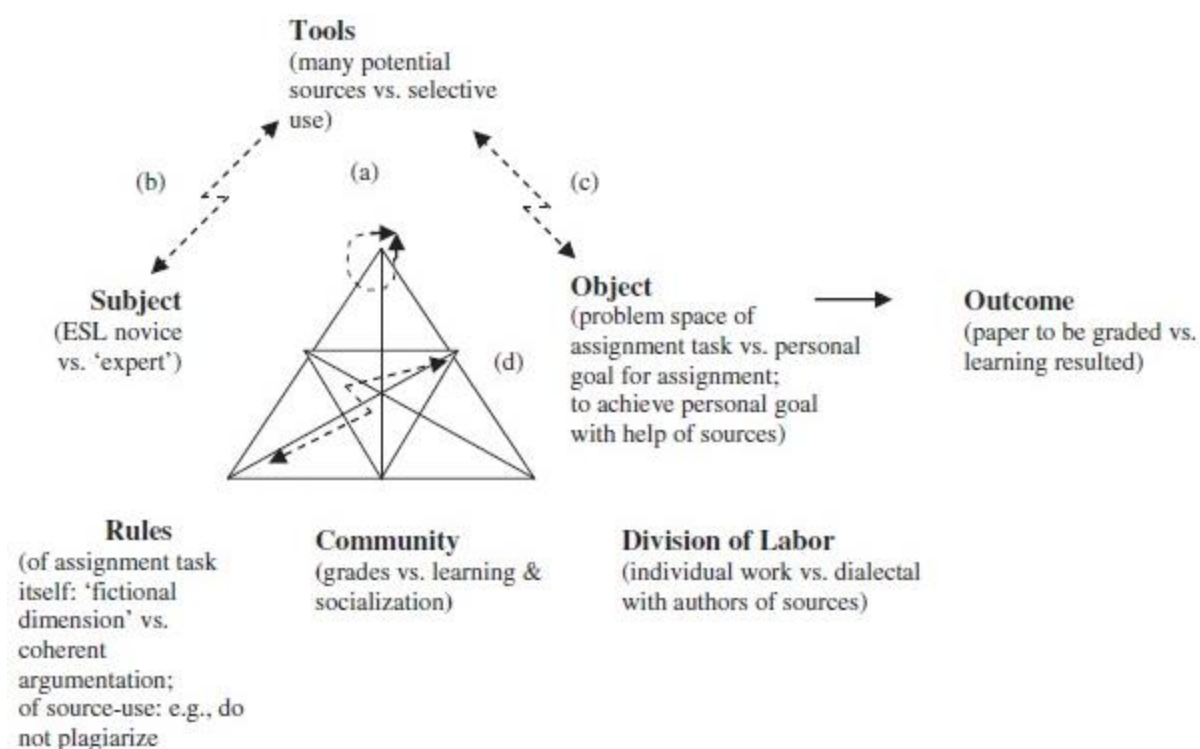


Figure 3 Contradictions in an individual student's activity system (Li, 2013:78)

There are similar research studies of activity in university environments. They have investigated the activity system categories. These are important examples because they may provide a model for my study. The first activity system (Table 1) is from Xing et al. (2014) who were examining student participation in an online Mathematics discussion board.

Measure-metric	Definition
Object	Solve learning tasks such as solving a problem or producing an artifact (e.g. essays)
Subject	Individual student involved in this activity. When assessing learning, an individual's differences of effort, motivation, roles etc. should be taken into account
Tools	Computers, online tools, systems, and environments that mediate the learning activity
Community	Direct and indirect communication enables an individual subject to help maintain a sense of community with other students, teachers, and support staff
Rules	Implicit and explicit rules and guidelines that constrain the activity. For example, teachers can set specific rules for a learning task (explicit) and an individual student can only use the functions residing in the supporting tools (implicit)
Division of Labor	Concrete contribution each individual makes to the overall object

Table 1 Activity system for online Math discussion board (Xing et al., 2014: 61)

Certain categories (i.e. measure- metrics) are of interest. The subject is set at the individual who is judged on motivation, which indicates a role for agency in this study. Even though this is a group activity, conducted online, the Subject is set at the individual level “in order to highlight the learning outcome of an individual student to facilitate assessment in individual accountability,” (Xing et al., 2014). The mediating tools include the physical technological tools needed for online work, and software that allows the computer user to communicate. The rules are expressed as constraints to activity. They are the rules set for the task and the limitation of the online platform. The object and outcome appear to have been conflated in the form of the essay. As stated by Engeström and Escalante (1996), the object is not the same category as the (short-term) goal of the activity. It is not proper for my study to speculate about what the object, properly defined, might have been in this study.

Li (2013) studied individual university L2-English students in Hong Kong, as they completed an essay, focusing on the students' use of sources for citations and also other sources of contradiction. The Table (2) is a listing of the static nodes (i.e. categories).

Node	Description
Subject	student
Object	PP [essay] in student's minds of eye [sic]
Outcome	PP [essay] to submit
Tools	GPE [Politics class] lectures & tutorials, previous knowledge, technology, tutor feedback on proposal, [citation] sources
Community	Microculture of GPE class; HU [university] institutional culture
Rules	Assignment guidelines; conventions of academic study
Division of labour	Instructors giving assignment and potential feedback & student fulfilling assignment

Table 2 Activity system for Politics students' essay task (Li, 2013: 77)

In this table, the object and outcome are conflated in the short-term goal (i.e. the essay). It is important to note the tools listed as being subject content (lectures, sources) and information derived from the relationship with the tutor (tutorial, feedback). These tools would likely help mediate the literacy process, but the writing tool is not specified explicitly. The roles of tutor and student are also found in the division of labour. The community is listed as the classroom, but also the university. Lastly, the rules are those of the assignment and the conventions, which includes plagiarism rules (Li, 2013).

Lei's (2008) observation study of essay mediation in individual students' Chinese tertiary EFL writing included an explanation of the activity system which are presented as mediating artefacts:

Thus, in a writing activity, **subjects'** actions towards **objects** are mediated by four interrelated factors:

mediating artifacts [i.e. physical/psychological **tools**] (e.g., computers and languages); **rules** (e.g., norms and sanctions); **community** (e.g., disciplinary community and discourse community); and **division of labor** (e.g. writers and readers)." (my emphasis) (Lei, 2008: 220) (my emphasis)

Lei's (2008) activity rules are listed as "norms and sanctions," but are not explained. In the analysis, the students' key tools were books and dictionaries, while computers were used for the writing of the essay, and other activities. Since the observations were lone-subject activities with no opportunities for assistance with revision, it seems odd that readers are listed among the division of labor items.

Lee's (2014) theoretical explanation of Hong Kong EFL teachers' activity systems is pertinent for my study. Lee presents an activity system of the teachers' feedback process (only). Lee superimposes, on the activity system as exists, the hoped-for activity system. Lee purports that EFL teachers' feedback is unhelpful because it is only detailed error feedback without

formative feedback that would engage students in correction. For example, the division of labour category in the existing activity system states “teachers dominate feedback process; students remain passive. Teachers lack autonomy and are constrained by hierarchical relationships.” Lee supports the replacement of this category with another, more interactive division of labour category: “Teachers share responsibility with students. Students as active agents. Teachers given autonomy to develop new rules,” (Lee, 2014: 209). This shows how an activity system can be used in a theoretical discussion explaining present and hoped-for activity systems as a heuristic for describing an activity. This theoretical paper is also in line with my belief that seeing feedback as part of a developmental process means that students are more likely to be engaged in literacy processes, and in learning from feedback.

2.6.3 SCT/AT and theories of appropriation, development and learning

Vygotsky’s SCT was constructed as a social-psychological theory that grew out of his research into learning and development. Vygotsky claimed that learning is a stage on the path to development, where “there is a unity but not an identity between learning and inner developmental processes,” (Vygotsky, 1982d in Chaiklin, 2003: 42). These two related processes could be indicated in externalised activity research. However, there will first be a discussion of concepts of learning.

The concept of learning, itself, has been challenged (Lave, 1999). Lave asserts that learning cannot be seen as the possession of an individual that the individual can use at will. Some in AT see appropriation as a more defensible explanation. In light of the SCT/AT definition, appropriation will be the relevant term, from this point onward. The concept of appropriation is considered to be different from that of learning in that it indicates a certain ability to use a tool, rather than having mastery over it, or having decontextualised knowledge (Rogoff, 1990, Wegerif, 2008, Mercer, 2008b, Rojas-Drummond et al., 2013). The appropriation of (use of) a tool occurred in a context that forms a part of the awareness of tool use that becomes a part of identity (Lave, 2012, Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000). The whole process is a social and cultural product (Lave, 2009, Cazden, 2001). However, the process of arriving at appropriation, within SCT/AT is necessary.

Vygotsky began by undertaking to explain learning and development as a process. Vygotsky was an educator who wanted to create an assessment of development, rather than assessing learning. Through his research process, he created the concept of the zone of proximal

development (ZPD) to express the social learning processes of instruction leading to internalisation and development, for children. Wells (1999: 333) has taken this to mean “any situation in which, while participating in an activity, individuals are in the process of developing mastery of a practice.” This presents the ZPD as a generalised theory of learning, including classroom learning with a teacher.

The ZPD has been used as a model of learning, in many studies of learners of various age groups. It provides a ready framework for social learning. However, it has been, in most of those cases, appropriated for the building of new theoretical constructs (Chaiklin, 2003). These theorists have not closely followed the ontology and epistemology of Vygotsky’s theory, and have instead chosen to base their work on aspects of the theory that were representative of the socially-oriented view of general learning. This may be because the Vygotskian ZPD is difficult to conceptualise, as it was left incomplete by Vygotsky’s untimely death (Chaiklin, 2003). The ZPD is also difficult to apply to learning, being that it was designed for particular early *developmental* stages in children’s lives, as studied in long-term research. It is a theory of development, separate from and pursuant to social learning.

Further, the ZPD was constructed as an explanation of an individual developmental process, not a group process (Donato, 1994). Therefore, it cannot be applied to group work as it would be impossible to differentiate group growth from individual growth. Lastly, the construction of the key explanation of the ZPD has within it an explanation of the role of instruction:

the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978: 86)

This seems to indicate the importance of the more capable interlocutor in the developmental process of another. This is, however, not about the skill of that assistant, but it “is to understand the meaning of that assistance in relation to a child’s learning and development,” (Chaiklin, 2003: 43). This would also require the setting of a number of baselines regarding present capabilities, in an experimental research methodology. These are the reasons why the ZPD concept will not be used in my study. Since my study is examining a process, a theory of learning that looks at it as a series of cyclical actions may be helpful.

The ZPD concept has been explicitly related to Engeström’s concept of expansive learning, as its foundation. When introducing development, involving various cycles of expansive learning, Engeström (1987) uses the process of change in a fictional character’s life (Huck

Finn), from a novel as an example. Engeström presents the activity system and the social network of his fictitious life. He does so to exemplify how each of the phases of his life progress leading to the completion of a ZPD, and concurrently, as Engeström refers to it, “a basic unit of expansive learning.” Each stage in the developmental model has as its ontogenesis an inherent contradiction which pushes Huck to the next stage, as shown in Figure 4. After each expansive cycle, the person’s activity system changes, since the previous challenge pushed the person to develop in some small way.

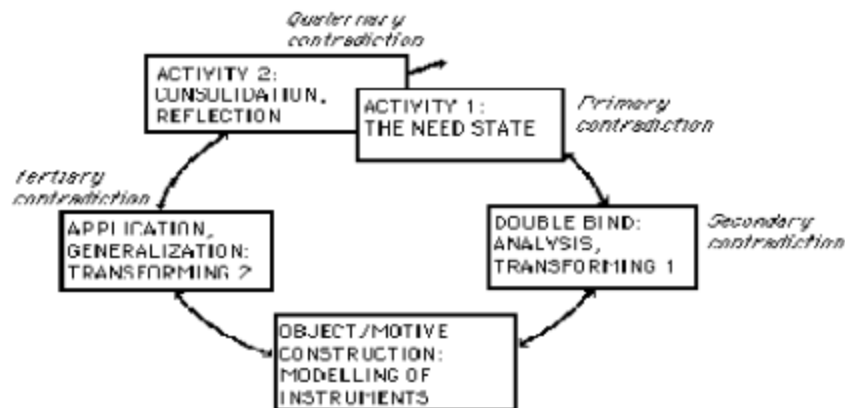


Figure 4 The phase structure of the ZPD (Engeström, 1987: 189)

In so doing, Engeström describes how Vygotsky’s ZPD does not describe an expansive learning process well enough. The process begins (above), when a contradiction arises in a person’s activity (“ACTIVITY 1”), necessitating an assessment of the skills and the ability to respond to this challenge (“DOUBLE BIND”). If the existing tools are not good enough, this creates a need to acquire knowledge, such as new intellectual tools, in order to rectify the contradiction. In other words, mediating tools can arise from the need to solve a problem. For example, in my study, a problem arising from a writing task may create the need for negotiation, in the pursuit of a new solution. From there, in the following steps, the person can construct, apply and reflect upon the new tool, thereby completing the cycle.

The need for learning then causes a search for mediating tools, to find a path to a solution. This can be viewed as the time when people are open to learning, and to being taught. The writer (a tutor, or a student) can thus feel forced to learn, as a natural part of a writing process. That would create a need (phase) for a learning activity. That need can arise from the realisation that there is a lack of required knowledge. This need may have an external source, such as tutor feedback, or from a students’ group discussion.

In an interaction, a “learner” could receive advice that raises a problem. From there, the learner may seek to solve this problem through means of discussion. It provides the issues and attempts at a solution. The closure of the cycle would however require that the writer receive positive feedback from a tutor. Though, since most feedback is summative, student literacy work has within it periods of uncertainty about correctness, especially during the productive (writing) phase. It is for this reason that group collaboration is important for my study. A researcher could study a student group’s literacy work to discover more about the nature of learning processes; how they start, what they discuss, how they conclude.

Engeström (1987) added to AT concepts about the process of appropriation, with the concept of *learning by expansion*. Engeström linked learning and the activity system into a process that allows the expression of the growth that occurs from learning. A person who completes a learning process can be said to have changed his/her activity system (which is equivalent to consciousness, as per Leont’ev). The fact that Engeström (1987) links learning with a stage (or iteration) of a personal activity system (as it is chronologically evolving), indicates how a person is perceived to be transforming through a long-term process of expansive learning cycles. This link with the activity system could also show how aspects of an activity system can change, over time, through expansive learning.

This process has seven well-defined steps that result in learning. This allows a researcher to describe an expansive process of learning, and analyse such events in a workplace, and particularly throughout the field of education.

The category of expansion (Engeström, 1987) is situated in the problem-solving context (Hundeide, 1985 in Engeström 1987) where conflicts and contradictions abound. This cycle of expansion includes changes in cognition and communication, and in material practice. Engeström sees this context as linked to learning in the modern world, due to the level of complexity of learning in a literate environment. Progression is a process whereby past achievements are transgressed, or surpassed, which brings about changes both to the actors and the context. Therefore, it can be seen how important the apprehension of change is as a goal of analysis.

The basis of this expansive learning context is activity, largely as it is presented in traditional AT. Engeström takes an interest in applying this construct as a research framework. The process of expansive learning, Engeström claims, can be modelled and applied despite learning

typically being of a long duration. However, such a process is claimed to be difficult to document, especially the psychological aspects.

The transformations that my study observed were those arising from literacy work which could be described as expansive learning. Learning in expansive cycles is not replication of an item. Learning is not about being taught to mimic an activity. The learners create a historically new activity:

teaching and learning are moving within the zone [ZPD] only when they aim at developing historically new forms of activity, not just at letting the learners acquire the societally existing or dominant forms as something individually new. (Engeström, 1987)

If a unique text is being created and not copied from elsewhere, this could be described as learning. This requirement for unique writing, and the complex, abstract nature of literacy make expansive learning a possibility.

In effect, if an item is complex, then it is necessary for the learner to interpret the item. Literacy is one such “item” that requires many cycles of expansive learning due to its abstract nature, coupled with the requirement for the production of unique texts. Appropriation of literacy is a long process, and not one which is completed in one lesson or cycle of activity. Literacy is also an item that, when learned, cannot necessarily be copied too regularly (i.e. unique texts). In other words, there may be many expansive processes occurring when a unique tertiary text is written. Viewed in this manner, literacy research would need to follow many processes concurrently, making research difficult.

This process, however, is a defensible understanding of most abstract learning. In mapping this onto the student groups’ literacy activity in my study, certain stages of the cycle will be recognised. For example, participants’ discussion extracts started with the presentation of a problem that required a new solution. This beginning stage indicated the starting of the learning cycle. As these discussions were very short, they tended to compress the cycle, and leave it incomplete (due to a lack of time for follow-up activity for consolidation).

My study of abstract learning is still analysable. In the interest of applying AT to research, Engeström (1987) presents four factors that make for an analysable activity:

First, activity must be pictured in its simplest, genetically original structural form, as the smallest unit that still preserves the essential unity and quality behind any complex activity.

Second, activity must be analyzable in its dynamics and transformations, in its evolution and historical change. No static or eternal models will do.

Third, activity must be analysable as a contextual or ecological phenomenon. The models will have to concentrate on systemic relations between the individual and the outside world.

Fourth, specifically human activity must be analyzable as culturally-mediated phenomenon. No dyadic organism-environment models will suffice. This requirement stems already from Hegel's insistence on the culturally-mediated, triadic or triangular structure of human activity. (Engeström, 1987)

My study presents a research plan that fits within this description for analysable activity (see Table 3). It has an appropriate unit of analysis, with analysable activity, taking into consideration the relevant contextual factors, so as to study systemic relations, and the role played by mediation.

In summary, AT has been shown to have contextualised and complex analytical tools for describing learning, and a workable research epistemology. The next section will combine this system with the developing story of how SCT/AT has been used to research the context around university literacy, and tertiary literacy itself.

2.7 SCT/AT and the role of the student in tertiary appropriation research

This section will present the way that SCT/AT has interpreted, or could interpret, literacy within the university activity system, and how it problematises the role of tertiary literacy appropriation. This section will begin with macro-level AT studies. At this level, AT has been used to understand a large system and how it works, by looking at it as a static form. It can also indicate the effects of change in a system (Bourke & McGee, 2012). Either way, the systemic analysis can aid a researcher in finding contradictions and tensions (see Figure 3).

The university is the site of an intertwining set of activity systems of public policy application, quality assessment, learning assessment, including pedagogically-oriented disciplines. As they are each intertwined activity systems, it is natural to find some tensions between them. These tensions are reflected as part of the context of any one system. Russell, notes how AT provides “an expanded theory of dialectic that embraces objects and motives of collectives and their participants as well as reciprocal interactions among minds and texts in the interpenetration of social languages,” (1997: 506). In other words it can contextualise an activity and show how context affects activity. The dialectic indicates that the context is taken as a factor in activity.

Russell (1995: 18) clarifies the university disciplinary activity system, by calling it an activity system of academic life, inhabited by teachers and students. This is peripheral to the associated professional activity system(s) which it can induct students into. In class, the students can see what people in the professional activity system do, what they write, as well as how and why they write. However, when the students write, they do not approach professional scholarship, until they get to a very advanced level.

If the university discipline is seen as an activity system, its members need to communicate theory and research using a historically-situated disciplinary genre. Russell (1995) presents genre as one part of an activity system. Russell (1995) shows how writing at university is a communicative act within a community. Writing, as a tool, is one element of the functioning dynamic activity system. For writing to be called genre writing, it needs to be the language tool of a university discipline. For example, when a tutor writes an article, that is operationalising the activity system, through the use of the/a genre (Bazerman, 1994).

Later work by Engeström (1999: 35), as well as that of Russell (1995) has shown the multiplicity of activity systems involved in a complex activity (see also Kuuti, 1996). Indeed, Russell shows how the academic science discipline and professional science, as part of the broader science activity system, share objects, history and tools (such as a genre). However, it is the use of a disciplinary genre as a *Tool* of writing that is the mode of communication within the discipline, even outside the classroom (i.e. in “research”- see Figure 5- top left). It is that relationship between the academic and professional parts of a discipline that brings regeneration of the discipline and of the genres that it uses. The literacy groups (3 students) in my study are, each, also a system which is related to the aforementioned disciplinary systems. It is this small literacy group system which is the focus of my study because of their literacy activities.

Russell applied this concept of genre communication to an analysis of university literacy pedagogy (Russell, 1995: 17). It is the disciplinary genre which students need to learn in order to join the disciplinary conversation. It is for this reason that disciplinary writing is more salient to students and teachers, and should be taught more explicitly.

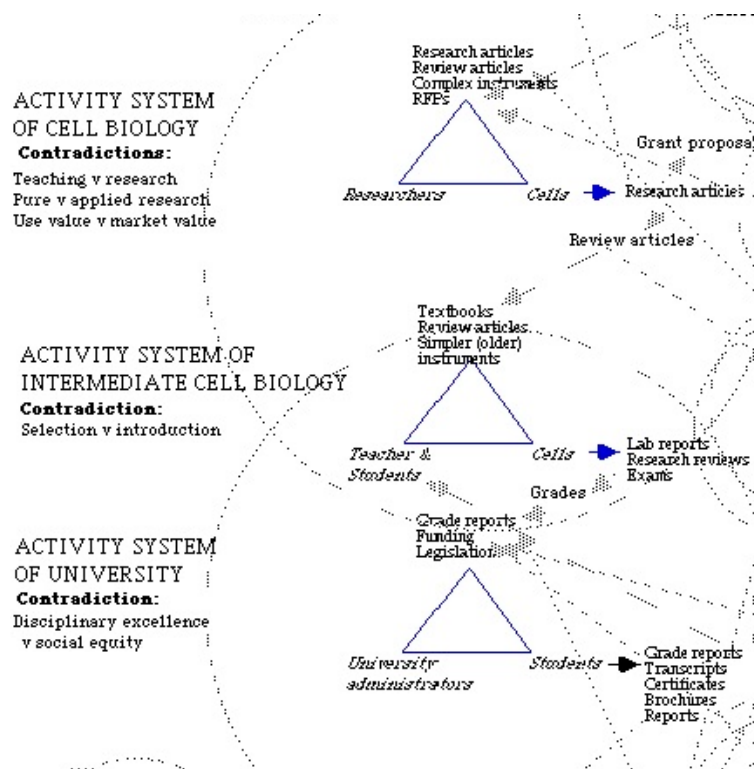


Figure 5 Genre system of an intermediate Cell Biology classroom group (Russell, 1997: 525)

However, Russell's (1995) activity-system explanation of university writing instruction showed how general writing skills instruction (GWSI) at American universities, which most first-year students partake in, is not fit for this purpose. GWSI is most like EAP in the UK. GWSI does not use a genre that any disciplinary activity system would recognise. Indeed, GWSI was based on prescriptivist analysis of rhetoric and communication of a general academic nature (Gardner & Nesi, 2013).

Therefore, when students write a general text, they are detached from a realistic objective, and are thus not writing in a disciplinary genre, but a general academic genre. In other words, writing without having an activity system to write within, is not realistic communication, and is thus of marginal value. The lack of a realistic goal is coupled with the lack of a genre standard which students can use in communication, in order to become proficient. Nevertheless, as Russell has shown, GWSI is a part of the university literacy culture, even though it has no natural disciplinary community, or activity system.

For Russell, the solution to this pedagogical problem involves Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) theory. It has been properly constituted as a method of inducting students into the community of their discipline, and its communication habits. WAC theory is comparable to

academic literacy theory, in the UK (Russell, 2001). Lillis (2001) is a proponent of expanding such literacy pedagogy provision in UK universities.

While US students are required to partake in some literacy pedagogy, this is not a requirement in the UK. L1 and L2-English students gain entry to university through educational and linguistic criteria set by the disciplinary departments (that becomes university policy), such as the IELTS (L2-English) language test (Gardner & Nesi, 2013). Gaining entry means that the university is satisfied that the student is sufficiently capable. Therefore, it is only when a student is failing to meet the writing standards of the university that literacy pedagogy becomes an issue. If the student is sent for remedial literacy lessons, the pedagogy is most often generalist, like the US GWSI model.

The work of Russell and Lillis has shown how AT can present a historically and culturally-oriented argument for the expansion of communicative genre-based literacy in the disciplines, and literacy pedagogy. Within a discipline, writing is a tool which mediates students' learning and the assessment which disciplines and universities require.

An alternate pole of literacy, and literacy pedagogy is the classroom which exists within a discipline, as a place where a disciplinary genre's habits meet with the "teaching" and learning of content (top left, Figure 5). For example, the Cell Biology discipline (circle-top right) overlaps with the university activity system (circle- bottom right, label- bottom left), which has as an *Object*, the oversight of "disciplinary excellence." That is mostly achieved through forms of written student assessment. Therefore, writing in universities exists within a university system that demands writing as proof of learning. This therefore means that the classroom activity system is the arbiter of the norms of a discipline, and of the university. That means that a tutor who assesses students' writing indicates to the students what the standards of a genre are. It is for this reason that my study focuses on the literacy work of students within the wider context of their classroom group, which provides genre norms.

The use of a disciplinary genre in a classroom is a complex process, related as they are to the teacher's activity systems (e.g. background, pedagogy). Tutors need to make choices about the form of assessment and the degree to which that assessment reifies the norms of a genre. That is to say that the tutor can decide on whether s/he expects the students to replicate a disciplinary genre in an assessment. It is the tutor's view of feedback as literacy pedagogy that affects the way that the genre is communicated to students.

There is some doubt amongst tutors and students as to whether the classroom writing genre is more a university genre, or a disciplinary genre. “Ordinarily, students and professors perceive the classroom genres as operating in the genre system of the university more immediately and directly than in the genre system of a discipline,” (Freedman et al, 1994; Freedman & Adam, in press; Russell & Booker, 1997; Anson & Forsberg, 1990 in Russell, 1997). In practice, the classroom system is modelled to some degree on the disciplinary genre. That degree depends on the local situation; the tutor, the task, the pedagogical goals of a classroom group.

2.7.1 What kind of community is the tertiary classroom?

If a university discipline is the place where a profession regenerates itself, by preparing its next generation of members, then it might be considered a self-generating community. Due to the complex nature of many professions, the method of preparation is more like education than training. If a discipline can be conceived of as a community, the Community of Practice (CoP) framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991) might be useful for understanding the education which goes on within the university. The goals of a discipline are education, but of a particular kind. Generally, it can be said of many disciplines that successful (undergraduate) studies are an entrée into professional work in the associated professional discipline. That means to say that the place of learning is most often not the community that the students wish to become a part of, as professionals. It is as if university is the place where students are inducted into the wider discipline by way of the academic discipline.

The CoP framework describes the work of communities where the form of education could be loosely analogised to an apprenticeship. It seems to be so because tutors exist at the centre of a community (with status as professionals of the discipline), and students are at the periphery trying to gain entry (known as LPP1).

However, there are many problems with the CoP model in university disciplines. The first of those is the complexity of the relationships between the members (at different levels) in the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991, Woodward-Kron, 2004:141). Firstly, in most cases, students are taught by many different tutors in any given year (Russell, 1998). Secondly, if an institution has charged the same individuals with both teaching and assessing roles with newcomers, then the relationship involves permanent power differential (Lea, 2005: 192).

A pedagogical system in a CoP involves modelling of ideal practices. This is provided for the LPP1 learner before the demand that the learner take responsibility for production. If a student is to become a member of a community, then they must communicate with the community in a way that reflects “the cultural and social practices” of that community (Rojas-Drummond et al., 2013). However, the university assessment system requires responsible production before, and often without any access to, or modelling of, the product: “Access can be denied by not giving productive access to activity in communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 103). This cannot therefore be called an apprenticeship (Belcher, 1994).

It has been put forth that, due to the nature of education, learning in educational institutions is a cognitive apprenticeship (Austin, 2009). Because of the nature of the skills to be learned, and then produced, there are disciplinary rules and often university rules regarding production. These are coupled with the task instructions that set out the parameters of the appearance and style of the product. Lastly, most university production is assessed based on criteria. As shown, criteria of assessment are so complex as to be difficult to interpret with reliability by students. However, none of them are designed to teach students the expression of an appropriate epistemology, authority and contestation. None of these parameters could be considered tools of apprenticeship. In other words, there has been recognised a failure to provide scaffolding of learning as regards writing (Belcher, 1994).

University education can be viewed as a discourse community (Bazerman, 1988, Swales, 1990) if one were to focus on a discipline. However, this community could not easily be called a CoP. When language (written or spoken) is a professional tool, then its development needs to be central to advancement.

One problem for CoPs is the place of learning for newcomers in the developmental cycles of the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 100). When one looks at the knowledge base to be appropriated by students, it is usually immense. The input phase can last from 3 to 4 years for students to reach the first level of achievement. However, all of these subject areas are historically situated, and changing regularly. It is not always possible for universities to provide the latest information.

Students also are not expected to perform in the professional sphere, when being assessed. Students are not expected to write to the same professional standards as their tutors. Therefore, an educational establishment, like a university may not be a CoP with respect to assessment.

A further complication exists for HSS students, among others. The nature of the knowledge acquired is unstable for another reason. Much of HSS theoretical constructs are thought of as objectively-sculpted opinion, in the form of theories. That means that these opinions are, by their nature, open to challenge, with an inherent uncertainty. That makes for contested knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 91).

There is also doubt from the students' perspective. Students have been found to claim that they do not feel apprenticed (Candlin & Plum, 1999). The assessment requirements themselves can often raise doubts in the students' minds, such that they spend an inordinate amount of time studying requirements (Putz & Arnold, 2001 in Lea 2005:190). This can lead to difficulties engaging in literacy discourse (Lea, 2005:192). In other ways, a student's poor use of language may cause a student to be marginalised rather than assisted (Lea, 2005:191). This is how the CoP model, in my study, is understood as not fitting well with disciplines and processes of disciplinary writing appropriation.

As regards community of learning, it is said that students who cooperate together develop their own community of practice that is not necessarily related to the actions of the disciplinary community of their tutors (Orsmond, Merry & Calaghan, 2013, Lea, 2005:193). Though students can eventually gain entry into the disciplinary community, until they can understand content knowledge and the meta-language of the genre, they can best understand each other, being that they are appropriating content and literacy together. It is even uncertain whether students have a perception of a disciplinary genre as being something separate from the fulfilment of a task. If this can be extrapolated, one of the goals of such a community would be to acquire an understanding of the tenets of the "classroom", or university genre. This can be done, by students, through the discussion brought about by work on an essay task. This is why group work is important to my study. It is for this reason that my study is interested in students' literacy negotiation.

It is then easy to see how students have their own CoP when it is shown how the expectations of students' writing can differ between tutors and students (Lea & Street, 1998). The classroom activity system is thus shown as a place where the tutor has the writing knowledge, but students cannot easily access it. This is what Lea & Street interpret as the basis of the inequality of power in classroom groups, between tutors and students (1998). This means that students struggle to appropriate the genre, which maintains their status as followers/peripheral.

Assessment can play a role of furthering education or alternatively, be simply a process of quality control, known in tertiary education pejoratively as gatekeeping (Taras, 2005). This is a metaphor for the seeming inflexibility of university assessment. Instead of garnering further training, insufficient quality of production (i.e. failing an assessment), in university, can lead to a student's exclusion (Casanave, 1992; Prior, 1995). This gatekeeper function falls on tutors. This means that the instructor in university is also the assessor and this person can bar entry to those on the periphery. If university education were a community of practice, assessment would be primarily a tool for aiding development and not for the verification of the meeting of assessment criteria.

If language, primarily written, is an important tool of the trade in university, it should be "encapsulated in the social practices of a discrete community," (Russell, 1998). That is interpreted as supporting literacy as a central function of learning. A CoP would be looking upon the development of writing as a creative process, rather than as a product (Wen, 2013, Cazden, 2001).

If disciplinary study were a CoP, it would be necessary to improve our understanding of literacy apprenticeship processes. It is also important to study students' processes of appropriation, as they use a genre (to the degree that they know it) to write an essay. If students are viewed as possessing the ability to appropriate a genre, then research can analyse the writing of tasks and resulting essays, to discover how students' operate within their own activity systems, communicating with their discipline. This would include researching the student's experiences, background and agency (Lillis, 2001). This sort of study lends itself to the use of AT analytical systems.

2.8 SCT/AT research into university literacy as student social activity

This section will show how SCT/AT has been used to examine various university-based systems with respect to the literacy work therein. Constructivist views of education assert that it is necessary to take students' points of view and knowledge into account when studying an activity. This section will examine the relevant research, their methods and pertinent results, and examine how applicable they might be to my study. It can be seen that generally, SCT studies use well-known ethnographic methods of data gathering.

The benefit of such a method is that it would witness literacy work that cannot otherwise be recalled. Literacy can be defined by people's perspectives, but also by their literacy-oriented actions. SCT/AT researchers often employ ethnographic methods to examine group work. The main difference between epistemology behind ethnographic research and that of SCT/AT is the types of data, and the meaning of that data. SCT/AT focus on types of data that would be called macro data in ethnographic research (Mercer & Wegerif, 2008).

SCT research has been used to show many important aspects of the power relationships involved in university literacy processes. Abasi & Graves (2008) examined the role of plagiarism rules in the writing development of L2 students who were studying at an Anglophone university at the post-graduate level. It approached the students' process of developing their academic writing as a social discourse between the university and tutor on the one hand and students on the other. This ethnographic study used interviews with tutors and students to show how literacy work, as social practice, had a dialogic component that affected students' writing. This interaction was developed through Bakhtin's dialogic construct of intertextuality, or the ways that texts are linked (Abasi & Graves, 2008: 221).

Abasi & Graves (2008: 231) claim that students' and teachers' dialogic work is a "transformative pedagogy" that is dynamic. The dialogic relationship should be with the tutor, through feedback processes. However there is ample evidence that the dialogue regarding writing was often absent.

However, the tutors were in favour of the university's stress on plagiarism rules. This was coupled with their lack of awareness of any students' difficulties, and their low opinion of students' writing. These tutors engaged in exhortations (in lieu of feedback) to students about literacy that were often too culturally-specific (to the genre only the tutor knew) to be understood by the students. Therefore, the university and tutor were seen by students as one unit; a rule-based system. As a result of this, the students' development of writing was shown to be impeded by this lack of classroom discussion of methods of citation, epistemology and rhetoric.

Though students were also confused by the plagiarism rules, their writing responded to these "pedagogical and institutional practices," (Abasi & Graves, 2008: 223) indicated in rule documents. The rules, due to a lack of literacy instruction, were one of the mediating tools for writing. Abasi and Graves (2008) used of Bakhtin's intertextuality concept to show how students' writing was interacting with these rules, instead of with the disciplinary genre.

Students were reacting to the absence of literacy pedagogy by placing too much emphasis on avoiding plagiarism (as per the rules).

However, these did not clearly connect the students' writing process with the systemic tensions arising from the classroom activity system. From an SCT perspective this research did show some interesting tendencies. Firstly, the students' desire to learn about literacy was frustrated by a lack of communication, or social process. This showed, from the perspective of AT (Engestrom, 1999), the tension arising in literacy appropriation when the path to the goal, disciplinary literacy, was not conducive to progress. Taken from the perspective of AT, the students, as part of classroom group's activity system, were witnessed questioning the rules of their system, and the division of labour. There was tension between two activity system categories (subject and rules). The students were also seeking greater communication, regarding literacy, with their tutors (as part of division of labour). This could be seen as tension between the two categories of subject and the division of labour.

Also evident was the university as a complex system where power relations played a role in students' process of learning (Russell et al., 2009, Lea & Street, 1998). The tutors, as regards literacy, were seen largely as part of the university assessment activity system, rather than as a provider of literacy tools. Lea and Street (1998) note that such power differentials affect the way that students develop their literacy.

In AT, the activity system for classroom group literacy typically finds that students use physical mediating tools, like sources of content knowledge (e.g. books) and computers, and literacy awareness as a psychological tool. However, the intertextuality between the rules and students' writing indicated that the students were using rules as a mediating tool. Awareness of rules, particularly about plagiarism, is important for students writing an assessment task. However, these rules tend to be constraints that function as an assessment of quality, and do not function as a tool. This is why they tend to be categorised as a rule.

This showed how SCT/AT can be used to examine macro power relationships (Russell, 1997, Lea & Street, 1998) within the classroom, discipline and the university, very little research has used the AT framework for analysing the micro processes involved in complex literacy practices, especially at university (Li, 2013). Following are several of those micro-level studies. They can be separated into those that look at systemic factors such as students' writing strategy and communication, and those that look at aspects of the process of writing itself.

AT has been used to study the role of tutors in students' literacy processes, through formative feedback. Lee (2014) studied the EFL tutor's activity system for the act of tutor feedback. She used the activity system heuristic to show how feedback, as detailed error correction without formative advice, is an inappropriate Object for tutors. The reason for this is that the Outcome of the tutor's activity system is listed as indicating little student engagement with feedback. However, if that Object is replaced, the Outcome should also change, for the better. As Lee claims, "Detailed error feedback will have to be replaced by feedback that is more informative and diagnostic," which Lee calls "formative feedback to help them improve learning, to motivate them, and to make them autonomous writers in the long run," (Lee, 2014: 208). This study is important because it does indicate the role played by the tutor as a provider of literacy mediation.

Observation studies can investigate aspects of group work. Yang (2014) studied Business students in a Canadian university, who were mostly of Chinese background, writing a collaborative essay. One focus was on the subjects (i.e. the individual student groups) and how they created rules for cooperation. This was done through observation (with field notes) and interviews (recorded). It was found that one all-Chinese group had preferred group harmony over the expression of a critical analysis of a fellow-student's contributions. Participants were also asked about the role (positive and negative) of the students' L1, and L2 English, in the task process. For example, the groups which were all Chinese, preferred to use Chinese in their discussions because it allowed them to communicate more easily and to think more clearly. These findings are important for a broader assessment of collaborative work, particularly the effect of L1 culture and language on L2-English writing.

Research has been done into mediating tools. The study by Lei (2008) used observation to learn about tertiary students' writing processes. She observed and recorded individual students' processes in a quasi-experimental study. Her focus was on the effect of tool mediation, including technological tools and books, such as dictionaries. There was also the use of interviews to investigate the student's perspectives on their activities.

One of those mediating tools, sources of content information, was the focus of another study. The work of Li (2013) looked at the writing processes of L2 English university students in a Hong Kong university disciplinary course. Interviews and student logs were used as data sources. Of importance here is the tensions which drove the students to take particular actions regarding their use of source texts.

There was one study that looked at communication and its role in tertiary assignments (Xing et al., 2014). Their study followed the work of Mathematics students working together but at different sites. They examined the email communications to discover any examples of student engagement with the work. The purposes of this was to systematise a computer scanning system for tutors to do this instantaneously, to cut down on the time spent examining students' processes because Xing et al. (2014) claimed that one particularly time-consuming and subjective form of student supervision is observation.

These studies have shown how varied AT literacy research can be, from micro level of students' and tutors' work to more macro issues like feedback theory. For my study, group cooperation is important, as is the language that they use to communicate, as a mediating tool. Observation is an important technique as it can indicate the role played by other mediating tools, such as source books. It is also worthwhile trying to understand the tensions created by the difficult task of writing a tertiary essay.

However, none of these studies look at the dynamic literacy processes around the act of writing for individuals or groups. My study will be exploring how the dialogue that occurs in tertiary literacy processes can fruitfully be examined through Activity Theory (Li, 2012). Before that can be explained, however, there must be an explanation of how SCT/AT have viewed the study of educational dialogue derived from the observation of learning processes.

2.9 Scaffolding as educational dialogue

Participation in group educational tasks creates teaching and learning opportunities amongst members, and in this way creates meaning and understanding (Donato, 2000, Mercer, 1995). In describing the theoretical constructs of group appropriation, SCT Vygotskian theory, within the ZPD concept, has developed the concept of scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) wherein more knowledgeable people help those less able, through discussion. This is because constructivist theory asserts that "knowledge cannot be transmitted," (Larochelle & Bednarz, 1998: 8). Therefore, appropriation is not a "channel of transmission," from a tutor, but something which is constructed by the learner.

Scaffolding, as a form of teaching, is seen as a technique that provides an appropriate degree of assistance, and that degree depends on knowledge of the learner's ability. Researchers have distilled scaffolding down to a repertoire of degrees (the points on a scale) in a study of a

foreign language class (see Figure 6 Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994: 471). The tutor can choose how much to assist, through the modulation of individual feedback, depending on how much help that tutor feels the student needs. The implication is that the assistance must not be too much. The student must be challenged.

Such verbal corrective feedback is seen as a “collaborative process where the dynamics of the interaction itself shape the nature of the feedback” (Lantolf, 2006). In a similar way, meaning is a process of “negotiated discovery” (Ohta, 2000:54) wherein tutors engage with students in a search for an appropriate level of assistance (Ohta, 2000, Gee, 1994).

0. Tutor asks the learner to read, find the errors, and correct them independently, prior to tutorial.
1. Construction of a “collaborative frame” prompted by the presence of the tutor as a potential dialogic partner.
2. Prompted or focused reading of the sentence that contains the error by the learner or the tutor.
3. Tutor indicates that something may be wrong in a segment (e.g. sentence, clause, line) – “is there anything wrong in this sentence?”
4. Tutor rejects unsuccessful attempts at recognizing the error.
5. Tutor narrows down the location of the error (e.g. tutor repeats or points to the specific segment which contains the error).
6. Tutor indicates the nature of the error, but does not identify the error (e.g. “There is something wrong with the sense marking here”).
7. Tutor identifies the error (“You can’t use an auxiliary here”).
8. Tutor rejects learner’s unsuccessful attempts at correcting the error.
9. Tutor provides clues to help the learner arrive at the correct form (“It is not really past but some thing that is still going on”).
10. Tutor provides the correct form.
11. Tutor provides some explanation for use of the correct form.
12. Tutor provides examples of the correct pattern when other forms of help fail to produce an appropriate responsive action.

Figure 6 Regulatory scale- Implicit (strategic) to explicit (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994: 471)

However, to this point, the Aljaafreh & Lantolf scale has only been used in L2 language classes. Language classes have less complex literacy goals than disciplinary courses, since learning goals can be more clearly delineated (Lantolf, 2006), because of the tendency to teach component parts of a language (e.g. verb declensions).

Secondly, within university disciplines, there is often little opportunity to negotiate disciplinary feedback due to modular course structures (Lea & Street, 1998. Orsmond et al. 2005 Pokorny & Pickford 2010) with terminal assessments. Such terminal feedback is regarded as not being beneficial, at least in the short term (Pokorny & Pickford, 2010).

If Rogoff’s (1990) three-stage process of scaffolding within classroom teaching is used as a template, then this process may not fit with that of tertiary literacy. Stage 1, apprenticeship, is where the teacher assesses the student’s abilities and delivers an appropriately challenging lesson, perhaps even modelling the process. As seen above, literacy is most often not part of class work, and it is not common to see modelling of literacy. Indeed, most of the “responsibility” (Lantolf, 1994) for progress in literacy is forced upon the student. The second stage, guided participation, is a chance for the teacher to facilitate more freedom of choice for the student, guiding them as needed. If feedback can be considered such guidance, then this may apply. However, the third stage, participatory appropriation, is the place where the student begins to work alone and plan for similar future challenges. As we have seen, literacy work is

most often completed without detailed knowledge about a genre, or about tutors' expectations. Therefore, Rogoff's model might not be appropriate for tertiary literacy work.

There are however other learning situations that are indicative of scaffolding. While when Vygotsky noted that learning and development required a more advanced 'teacher', he implied a teaching situation with a tutor. Others have seen that most student group work involves input from all members, regardless of their different capabilities (Wells, 1999).

Students can and do learn in environments other than the classroom (in the presence of a tutor). A group setting (Ferholt & Lecusay, 2010) can be an opportunity for learning. Learning in such an environment indicates that co-operation and social interaction are valuable. Participants in a learning activity interact, and can, alternate between teaching and learning, regardless of their formal roles. This is known as non-transmitive knowing (Roth & Radford, 2010), symmetrical learning (Fernández, et al., 2001), or collective scaffolding (Donato, 1994). This kind of scaffolding may indeed occur, but it is necessary to discover whether the particular group work leads to improvement in writing.

However, the construct of scaffolding requires that the item being discussed is one where the answer is clear enough to be known, or found, by at least one of the parties (or even by an observing researcher). That indicates an almost positivist view of education, or that the student work is a clear, simple task with a well-defined answer. However, even under such conditions, Swain and Lapkin (2002) have found that teacher scaffolding can produce unexpected results.

Therefore, scaffolding seems to assume a known path towards the appropriation of a defined item, and could be better suited to the appropriation of subject content, in a classroom (Howe, 2013). While content knowledge appropriation is complex, writing at university can be even more so, as each task has its own path to successful completion.

Tertiary literacy appropriation is often a far more complex, abstract set of concepts (Sharples, 1999). Disciplinary literacy is considered a tool of communication and learning, but its use demands not just knowledge of disciplinary genre, but also a certain degree of creativity. Students often write without a full concept of what appropriate writing is, or without knowing the appropriate genre style. While they are working on writing, there is no genre expert present who can decide on correctness. The writer decides on what he/she considers to be the appropriate expression of writing quality for that task.

However, the appropriateness of any such writing is often decided by the tutor. That, however, can be transmitted through feedback, after the writing has been submitted. Further, it is even harder for a researcher to know whether the students' writing decisions are acceptable, without also consulting with the students' tutor (Woodward-Kron, 2007).

It is for this reason that a method which focuses on the discourse exchanges is perhaps preferable to one that assumes well-defined progression paths and scaffolding. This developmental process can be witnessed through observing cooperative group work. The observation should be contextualised enough to see the role of the community and personal enough to see the agency of the students.

2.10 Researching collaborative activity and educational talk

Within SCT/AT research, tertiary educational environments have been studied, including those of university students performing literacy tasks (Yang, 2014). However, these have not centred upon the process of literacy work, at the level of contextualised discourse. This section will investigate the communication inherent in literacy work.

The HSS student must marshal her/his awareness of content, and the awareness of the way to create a text (i.e. writing). Adult students are expected to take more personal responsibility by completing complex written tasks on their own for individual assessment. While the impression of the essay-writing process is typically that it is a solitary exercise (Tsui, 1996), disciplinary writing is inherently communicative. When students write an essay, it has been shown that they are communicating with the tutor in a fashion that is recognised in most disciplines (Russell, 1995, Biggs & Tang, 2011). Therefore, literacy processes are communicative.

However, there is a limit to the pedagogical value, for the student, of this communication using a written disciplinary genre since post hoc feedback may not aid future tasks. Furthermore, the classroom is not often the site of literacy dialogue on concurrent tasks, or the literacy work. The fact that an assessment task is set does not imply that there will be a discussion of the relevant literacy issues. Therefore, the majority of literacy work (and possible literacy appropriation) is conducted elsewhere by a student or students, where any tutor assistance would be incidental and not concurrent. It is for this reason that my study will look at writing processes in the private sphere, where most student literacy activity occurs.

2.10.1 The Importance of dialogue

When students are working together collaboratively, writing an essay, this work tends to show characteristics of a social activity. There is often a need to communicate to discuss aspects of the text. It is through this need that literacy exists as a group endeavour. The participants will, to some degree, present their best, most relevant contributions to a group text. So, such writing can then be a social activity. This is particularly true of the convergent task, or the single task, shared by a group. In certain key ways, then, such literacy work is mediated by a kind of educational dialogue.

This type of dialogue has become more important as researchers realise that the “development of knowledge and understanding” should give “more explicit recognition to the role of language as a means for constructing knowledge and understanding.” This perspective views the language of learners as a “social mode of thinking” that “treats knowledge as something which is socially constructed.” This is what Mercer (1995:4) calls the socio-cultural approach, which has its roots in Vygotskian theory.

Student group discourse has been studied in a holistic manner using Sociocultural Discourse Analysis (SDA)(Mercer, 2010). This involves examining segments of discourse to show how participants engage with partners and their work. Mercer’s system of analysing educational talk (Mercer, 1995) has been used in studies of primary or secondary classrooms in quasi-experimental educational interventions (Mercer, 1987, 1995). The inductive analysis of educational dialogue has allowed for the creation of a framework for studying the dynamics and the quality of classroom educational talk amongst students, and between students and tutors (Mercer, 1995; Mercer & Littleton, 2007).

The concept of exploratory talk (Barnes, 1976 & 1992) is based on studies conducted on classroom dialogue between pupils and a tutor. This concept was then expanded on by other researchers. Mercer, after participating in a large-scale study of primary-school classroom talk (Edwards & Mercer, 1987, Maybin, Edwards & Mercer, 1988), extended the understanding of classroom dialogue to include discussions amongst pupils, without tutor intervention. Mercer’s studies were predicated upon the students, in groups, completing the same task together, within the confines of a lesson, in a classroom. He also expanded on the typology of classroom talk, to include two types of less-successful educational talk (explained below).

Most tertiary group literacy work is conducted outside the classroom. These private writing discussions can also be different from tutor-led classroom activity. Outside of the oversight of tutors, students have shown a difference in behaviour. Private literacy discussions allow students to agree on the topics and methods of discussion. Their desire to exchange ideas on a particular subject is telling as regards what it is that they are trying to learn (Mercer, 1995:68), and indicates agency (Waring, 2011), in the choosing and methods of pursuing short-term goals. Furthermore, productive talk is more likely to occur when a teacher is not present (Mercer, 1995:13). Therefore, such discussions are very important for the study of literacy processes.

Since tertiary literacy is creative and group literacy work is a social activity, then, for educators, there is importance placed on student discussion, if literacy appropriation is to be understood. When students are working to complete an essay task that requires engagement with subject content and expressing that content in writing, there are opportunities for exchanging perspectives. Engaged students will tend to contribute ideas in the pursuit of the betterment of their product, which may lead to literacy appropriation. This provides the opportunity for a study of writing processes and perspectives on literacy.

This method of researching group appropriation is vital to understanding educational dialogue holistically because it looks at the process of appropriation and not just the results. The main data are the words of the students derived from their activities. It is through their use of language that we can see how they transform their discussions into personal understanding (Mercer, 1995: 4). The explanation for this is that student work is not simply the accumulation of information. It is “working with information” (Mercer, 1995: 67). It is for this reason that SDA is an important research framework for the analysis of spoken group educational data.

Mercer (2008a: 166) describes this dialogic process as one “whereby people strive for intersubjectivity. We can see how they use language to introduce new information, orientate to each other’s perspectives and understandings and pursue joint plans of action.” Mercer is stressing that for conversation to be even minimally successful, the participants must build some semblance of common understanding through the use of language. This could be seen as a type of change in consciousness (Leont’ev, 1978, Engeström, 1987).

This building of common knowledge is a central facet of the analysis of language, in my study, because of the complexity of the tertiary literacy task, and the work that is required. It is this building of common understanding that is more important than any scaffolding of

knowledge that may occur. It is for this reason that my study is not primarily a textual study. For students to produce a text collaboratively, they need to work on common understanding, and yet come to the table with their own history/experience, goals and agency. They must therefore explain many of their ideas, taken from their relevant experience and try to be understood “whatever their relative ability” (Mercer, 1995: 90f). This is said to aid in the building of “a more explicit, organised, ‘distanced’ kind of understanding. This is important to my study because I believe that both the person explaining, and the person listening (who engages with these ideas) is to some degree improving their (individual and mutual) understanding, however temporary that might be. In other words, this kind of engaged literacy discourse may indicate the ways in which the literacy task is benefiting the participants. To some degree, this discourse also affects their writing process (planning, writing, editing), in situ.

Mercer expects a group’s ground rules of discussion to have equity of opportunity as a basis, so that all can be heard. This process is then expected to culminate in the acceptance of the most reasonable perspective from amongst the group. As Mercer has developed his educational talk theories from researching English school children, these ground rules may reflect a particularly English-speaking or Western norm.

Educational Talk amongst students, primarily due to differences in the program content and the tasks required of the students (particularly literacy), could be different in some important ways. Therefore, researching this discourse may require some modifications to existing research tools. This is the reason for the next section which will examine critically the nature of tertiary literacy and the tools of SDA from the perspective of AT.

The wider context of the group discussions is also vital for an understanding of the activity (Mercer, 1995:68). For Mercer, that context is limited to the classroom and the dynamic between pupil and teacher. For tertiary students, the context also includes classroom groups as the community. The tutor, as leader of the classroom group, sets the requirement for writing to ascertain learning, and sets the standard for quality, through an assessment of submissions. That means the tutor has both a direct and an indirect effect on students’ literacy work through teaching, the setting of tasks, and the imparting of advice about the content, or the genre. Lastly, it is the tutor who will interpret the written work, based on his/her view of the genre.

The immediate context of the students’ literacy work process is also important. The literacy work takes place within the student’s individual life context, which includes other concurrent

courses (McAlpine, 2004), and this affects the group, as a Subject. Individual agency, as a part of a student's activity system can be expressed in the way that an individual approaches aspects of the task, and can be indicated in dialogue.

Mercer claims that common knowledge is built by a group through the exchange of ideas. He claims that people have the ability "for providing their listeners or readers with what they need to observe or remember" (Mercer, 2000). It is therefore possible to show a discussion as a process of "contextual tracks made of common knowledge." This is said to usually be done "without much consciousness or awareness." It is Mercer's support of the unconscious processes of dialogue that has likely made Mercer's Educational Talk analysis almost exclusively an issue of meanings shared in dialogue, based on Bakhtin (1981). While Bakhtinian analysis looks only at utterances, ignoring other mediating tools, the complexity of tertiary literacy may make common knowledge more difficult to construct, necessitating a greater examination of those tools.

Due to the complexity of a tertiary disciplinary essay, students can struggle to provide the listener (in a discussion) with sufficient information. Genre writing, which students aim for, is so creative and so varied that there are a multitude of options to choose from, if those are known. There is rarely anyone who is "teaching" in such cases (Engeström, 2001). Therefore, discussions about literacy will be complex and uncertain, including the difficulty of expression, or explanation of those choices, and the effect of contextual factors on those choices.

The mediational tools for literacy dialogue are language tools, spoken and written, but of a particular kind; language about language, or metalanguage. Literacy dialogue, as an educational dialogue, is different from other kinds of educational dialogue. Literacy dialogue is dialogue that is most often directed towards the written word. It involves the expression in writing of content knowledge which tends to be easier to conceptualise. However, in disciplines, this expression is constrained to some degree by the genre, which is complex and difficult to conceptualise (as mentioned above).

This discourse is different from the discussion of subject content knowledge. While content knowledge is more likely to be a consistent item (e.g. the boiling point of water), a genre is not a fixed body of information that can be a source for "reproduction." There is no explicit norm, or answer, to aim for, while copying from disciplinary texts is heavily constrained (i.e. plagiarism rules). This raises the importance of the Rules of this activity.

This nature of genre writing means that it has within it some form of structural tension (Engeström, 1987). For example, the standard of written discourse that a tutor requires, the putative genre, is often unknown to students while they are writing for that tutor. Therefore, literacy discussions reveal students' opinions about and experience of similar tasks as they try to apply their awareness of genre to the task at hand. While the discussion of literacy could help all involved to develop insights, while writing, the genre is a common source of tension. This tension may be a visible driver of discussion, visible in dialogue.

As Mercer studies primary classrooms, the dialogue is about content at basic levels of learning. Although he does describe tasks, the tasks are not central to the discussion, as in a dialectic (Leont'ev, 1978). A dialectic study might seem an unnecessary addition to Mercer's description of cooperation through talk, and so Mercer (1995) explicitly marginalises dialectic. However, since tertiary essay tasks (i.e. the object) are of great importance to university students' success, the concept of dialectic is necessary for understanding the role of the task in the activity. Students will often refer to the task itself explicitly when writing an essay. Therefore, literacy work can be represented as a dialectic, or goal-directed dialogue (Leont'ev, 1978).

Therefore, tertiary literacy processes (i.e. writing an essay) provide for a complex activity, including a varied context, difficult processes, dialectic with a task, disciplinary subject content, and an uncertain end product (i.e. the essay). It is for that reason that my study will employ an activity system analysis to support the Exploratory Talk analysis. AT shows how an activity is motivated by an object (the completion of a course). The short-term outcome of this process, in my study, is the essay. Therefore, it is the task which drives their work and (genre) literacy is negotiated in the process of completing the task. Literacy is rarely an explicit goal of a writing task.

In conclusion, the importance of the study of Educational Talk is clear to educators. However, for my study of tertiary literacy talk, there will need to be an additional focus on the effect of the wider context, as defined above, in the form of the activity system. As a result of this first study into tertiary literacy work, there will be developed a more detailed description of the relevant Educational Talk derived inductively from my study.

2.10.2 A typology of educational talk

The typology of educational talk, from SDA, forms the basis of my discourse analysis. Though Mercer often uses Exploratory Talk to refer to his whole educational talk construct, I prefer Educational Talk (ET) for that construct, so as to be clear that it consists of three different types of talk (Disputational, Cumulative, Exploratory). These categories are largely mutually exclusive, though they can have some characteristics in common. Student collaborations have also been called joint constructions, with two types, Type 1 and Type 2 (Howe, 2009).

The Disputational type of talk is considered to be unproductive because of a lack of cooperation and a tendency toward argumentative behaviour. There is little evidence of joint thinking or action, or joint engagement with the task at hand. There could be moves within Disputational talk that include: a command, an assertion (Mercer & Littleton, 2007).

The Cumulative type of talk is said to be cooperative talk, but still not very productive because of the perceived intent of creating group unity. The reason for this is believed to be a lack of “critical consideration of ideas” (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). The discussion moves along slowly, with brief exchanges that most often lead to agreement. There could be moves within Cumulative talk that include: repetition, confirmation, elaboration. As possible aspect of Cumulative talk can be peer-to-peer teaching. This is known as Type 2 joint construction (Howe, 2009).

Exploratory Talk (ExT) is considered to be a discussion in which there is evidence of discernible critical engagement with the task, through talk (Mercer, 1995). This is called Type 1 joint construction by Howe (2009). Critical engagement is said to show evidence of reasoning, clarity and unified decision-making. It is indicative of the explicit exchange of ideas and the reasoning behind them. The critical evaluation of these ideas is expected to involve “constructive conflict” (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). The exchange of ideas, as critical analysis, is considered key to students’ furthering of understanding and learning in an educational situation.

It is for this same reason that talk classed as ExT is viewed as being more productive. It is said to promote understanding and learning because students engage “critically” and “constructively” with the ideas and the task presented (Mercer, 1995). In such an environment, when a student’s idea is engaged with, it can lead to the need for useful explication of that student’s perceptions of both the speaker and listener. This type of discourse is one within which improvements in understanding can be seen throughout a discussion process. This means

that exploratory dialogue, as a mediational tool, has particular qualities that indicate engagement in group-oriented ways of appropriation.

There are types of discourse which that are indicative of ExT. Some of those are “asking...questions, commenting and making suggestions” where people can “share information and plan together”, “discuss and evaluate” and “make joint decisions,” (Mercer, 1995: 103). These types of talk are typically found together in productive talk by the nature of the process of construction between people.

It is made clear that ET is not merely the sum of the various speaking parts. Mercer asserts that knowledge generation is interactive and “not really reducible to the form and content of individual statements,” (Mercer & Littleton, 2007: 102). It is his claim that we should look at discourse holistically as a “shared thought process.” Questioning or challenging an interlocutor can result in explanations, which can further both parties’ understanding.

Mercer does not support the reduction of research data to “a categorical tally, because such a move into abstracted data could not maintain the crucial involvement with the contextualized, dynamic nature of task,” (Mercer & Littleton, 2007: 62) (see also Mercer, 2000:154). It is not the intention of this study to reify decontextualised data. However, the building blocks of communication (or, an extract), in the examination of tertiary literacy talk, can also provide rich data to help explain the process of ET and the (literacy) content of the talk. Furthermore, in the same way that Maybin, Edwards and Mercer (1988) inductively studied primary and secondary talk, my study will do the same for tertiary talk. This is in recognition of the fact that their analysis resulted in their support for a more holistic view of ET extracts.

2.11 Summary

As this chapter has shown, there are many reasons why my study would be beneficial. I reviewed how universities often look upon students’ literacy as assessment and not as a guided entry into the communication habits of a discipline. This means that the tutor, who could be the students’ literacy models, are not witness to the students’ writing processes. Though some espouse a CoP view of the tertiary classroom, it was shown that this is often far from the case (Ellis, Taylor & Drury, 2007). Theoretical treatises regarding student processes and students being full members of the assessment cycle, as active agents have not been objectively proved to exist (Sadler 1998, Nicol & Macfarlane Dick 2006). This tends to show that this, in “the work of Black [above] and others...has so far had much less influence on higher education”

than in other levels of education (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006: 204). This may be due to the lack of universal training in pedagogy at university level, and the perceived nature of tertiary pedagogy.

Students often complain of poor communication on the issue of literacy. It is clear that students are often left to interpret what literacy is and the ways in which they can appropriate it. Therefore, they are often risking failure when operating in a genre that they do not understand. This can mean that the use of the genre by students can be haphazard. Research that shows students self-regulating their learning, under such a regime, is not common. My research is for those who wish to improve tertiary assessment & literacy-appropriation processes in order that a more relevant CoP model “which engages all students in academic and other kinds of learning” (in Macken-Horarik et al., 2006: 243) can emerge.

There is a great question as to how tertiary literacy can be studied within its wider context. Theories of tertiary learning and teaching should be founded on a research-derived epistemology. Without this, research on the “student experience” can become prey to political agendas (Haggis, 2009: 379). “Ideas such as ‘peer-learning’, ‘problem-based learning’ and ‘self-regulated learning’ could be seen to have developed as much in relation to cultural trends and value-positions as to research or theory.”

This chapter went on to argue that research into students’ literacy appropriation has been lacking in specificity and methodological breadth. However important student perspectives on literacy are, there are other methods of gathering literacy data that do not rely only on out-of-context interviews. De-contextualised students’ opinions cannot reveal how students try to deal with a task through a literacy-work process. Such a contextualised process has many relevant factors that can be seen only in activity.

If, at this point, feedback is the most common literacy tool for gaining entry to the community, then the effect of feedback on the writing process needs to be studied (Lee, 2014). Such a pedagogically-oriented perspective could lead to better literacy communication and verbal or written form (McAlpine, 2004). However, as this chapter argued, if university tutors are to improve their contribution to student literacy processes, there must be greater knowledge of students’ literacy processes (Hornsby & Osman, 2014, Yang, 2014). The tutor does not see the strategies that students use to write, or how the student conceives of the writing task (McAlpine, 2004).

The more that a tutor understands about students' writing issues, the more helpful s/he can be. It would involve participation by tutors in the students' processes. It could involve modelling of writing, with critical analysis of its qualities and co-operative classroom writing activity supported by feedback on content and writing (Ellis, Taylor & Drury, 2007). Indeed, tutors have realised that it may be important to engage in "developmental dialogue" about students' process of writing (Cazden, 2001).

This is why this chapter argued for looking at students' contextualised writing processes and the role they play in disciplinary literacy work and the appropriation of literacy. It is important to understand how students construct a text, using their awareness of literacy. This would require the observation of literacy work and the dynamics of the textual work, content and context being negotiated. This is why my study observed group work.

The study of contextualised processes is complex. Research into university learning has been characterised as often being overly simplified (Haggis, 2009: 389) if it does not look at the "different types of dynamic interaction and processes through time in relation to 'learning' situations." Research has yet to clearly assess disciplinary literacy appropriation by observing contextualised negotiation processes. Yet, these are the processes "underlying" appropriation (Howe, 2009).

This chapter provided a rationale for the study of students' use of language, during literacy work. This would provide a view of students' genre capabilities as they are being applied to their essay task. Therefore, it is possible to study group literacy work to understand language in use directed at disciplinary literacy. The holistic analysis of negotiation processes and literacy topics will allow for the linking of "processes of communication [and] thinking processes and ... learning outcomes," (Mercer, 2008b: 166).

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The study of literacy at university, within NLS and Academic Literacy theories has provided much clarification about students and their feelings about, and explicit understanding of, literacy, the effect of feedback, and contextual factors that impinge upon writing. Research has informed the Anglophone university community about the frustrating contradictions in literacy pedagogy. It has shown how students sometimes struggle to enter the disciplinary culture.

This creates the need for studies to further investigate the way that university students put their knowledge to work when negotiating literacy for the purposes of completing a task. There is a need for a greater focus on students' private group writing processes because many university writing tasks are completed under such conditions.

Existing research into students' literacy work has used ethnographic methods that were largely limited to non-real-time interviews about past experiences. This produces thick description and has enriched our knowledge of writing, and categories of literacy topic (Tardy, 2006, 2009), categories of affect and categories of agency.

However, those studies are unconcerned as regards the real-time appropriation process. Students are transformed by the activity of their literacy work and are put under pressure to produce work which will be assessed. HSS students attempt to meet the literacy demands of their discipline by completing essay tasks. They do so on an independent basis, outside of classroom time. They work under the instructions of the task. They bring to bear, if able, their relevant awareness of disciplinary writing, their awareness of the type of task, their relevant awareness of content, and their perception of their tutor's demands. There needs to be a study that shows the steps that students go through, the methods of expressing and negotiating literacy. This rich complex process can indicate how the state of their knowledge leads to common understanding and writing.

In this field of study, such observable work in university literacy has been studied by participant observers who thought the activity to be of secondary importance. Notable field note entries were made of activity, but only as a stimulus to interviews. The interviews were seen as the main source of salient data. These were asking for students' impressions of the work they were doing. These studies did not explain the students' processes, or the specific activities which led to appropriation.

My study is more interested in dynamic relationships that exist in any group work. This study answers the need for information about how students grow into the literacy of a discipline. This study investigates the factors that the students themselves consider important to their common work, and how they construct meaning together. These factors are the writing, the subject content and the wider context. These factors are seen to be part of the process of task completion, but they are the factors which students need to work with and reflect upon in order to grow into their disciplinary literacy.

The verbalisation of this literacy awareness can assist students in creating an understanding and in developing a meta-language. It also helps students reflect on their own writing and awareness of writing concepts. I was interested in studying how the group writing process brings students to verbalise and negotiate the literacy meanings inherent in their task, and how they construct their own meaning of task and consider the contributions of their partners. Lastly, the discussions will show how activity and the task cause a dialectic amongst the participants that leads to growth in understanding.

The literacy discussion will provide insights into students' decisions and perceptions. It will reveal aspects of their literacy background, their (short-term) agency and their motivation. The instrument for discussing the dynamics of negotiation is Mercer's (1995) ET analytical framework. Though ET research has been used to examine pupils' work in classrooms, it may need to be modified for studying adult learning. Firstly, ET provides explanations for extracts wherein a group is progressing in their understanding. However, ET does not provide a thorough review of the types of talk that exist across the range of productive and "non-productive" exchanges.

Dialogic theorists such as Mercer show dynamic exchanges, but this work has built little notice of the driving force of the task. A task is an added complexity, but progress can be marked in short, meaningful exchanges. These advances are not simply examples of "dialogic" work, but examples of bringing to bear knowledge of writing, content and context, in a rich complex goal-oriented discussion.

Previous work in dialogic study has been semi-experimental, as it sought to show causality, or show that ExT was capable of improving students' learning. Mercer has also not examined literacy. Therefore, further research is needed to bring this theory to the point where it can help researchers understand the dynamics of student literacy processes. Students' private work is important because students have been found to discuss more with peers than with teachers

(Galton, 1980). The work of students is different from that planned by teachers. Students, among themselves, are more likely to negotiate how to complete a task.

This study will aid our understanding of the literacy work of these particular tertiary students, in context. The research process used is one of discovery of capabilities. There is no need to impute causality. This will instead be an exploratory study of situated discourse.

This study sought to offer explanations of group work. As much school group work is an activity where ideas are created (or constructed) by people working on a task, this study is about the creation of meaning. Therefore, this study described the methods employed by students to solve the problems raised by their writing task, using a qualitative approach to analysis.

In this chapter, there will be an explanation of the research question, the rationale for and aims of the project, the methodological perspective, research design and methods of data collection, analysis and presentation used in the research project. The following sections will offer a justification for these steps as this is an important foundation of scientific-style enquiry.

3.2 Rationale

My work as an academic literacy tutor in the UK has helped me to recognise that students can negotiate literacy through discussion. There has been a call for a dynamic research method to observe real-time natural literacy work (Tardy, 2006, Gentil, 2011, Lillis, 2009) that Cazden (2001) believes can be done. Since that process is largely still unknown in the micro sense of real-time activities, negotiation and literacy content, this study looked at literacy work as it happened.

As there has not been a full examination of the factors affecting real-time university literacy work, my study contextualised the activities and explained the factors which affected a real-time literacy activity: the task, text construction, the use of content, and the effect of contextual factors.

3.3 Research question

As my study sought to learn about the process of disciplinary literacy negotiation in group activity, as seen through the observation of disciplinary literacy work, in situ, through the lens of AT, it seeks to answer the following research question:

How do the qualities of tertiary literacy group work aid our understanding of the factors which affect the negotiation of disciplinary genre literacy?

As most tertiary literacy work occurs outside of the classroom, this study is directed at tertiary out-of-school literacy activity. It was believed that such private tertiary literacy processes of groups was one type of literacy activity. A group was sought because of the activity required amongst participants, on the topic of the task, the discipline and literacy. The descriptive nature of the study was designed to produce some insight into the dynamics of the contextualised literacy activities and thus draw conclusions about the nature of students' goal-directed literacy awareness, the ways that students negotiated with others, and the relevant factors which affected their literacy work.

3.4 Aims of the study

In order to fulfil the goals arising from the research question, this study aimed to observe the naturalistic goal-directed literacy work of separate groups of students whose task it was to complete an essay task together, for a disciplinary lesson. This research environment would be viewed as being a site of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) as "much of what is learned is specific to the situation in which it is learned" (Anderson, Reder & Simon 1996: 5). Therefore, the activities would be studied for signs of collaboration, and of the use of literacy awareness to establish, as clearly as possible, the degree to which aspects of goal-directed literacy work are drivers of activity. The study will describe the content of the discussions in order to understand better the disciplinary or other types of issues raised that were relevant to the literacy activity.

In order to contextualise this activity and to construct a better understanding of the participants' perspectives regarding the activity, ethnographic methods were employed, including questionnaires and interviews.

The activity data that provided for this analysis was the language of the exchanges that participants used to construct the literacy concepts and to negotiate common understandings. These aims led to the choosing of research methods that were able to capture change, explain and contextualise the phenomena arising from the study. The following sections will show how this was achieved.

3.5 Research methodology

My study, described as to its processes and interpretive systems in this section, is a descriptive, cross-sectional qualitative study. It employs a historically- and culturally-situated social constructivist epistemology using ethnographic-type strategies of inquiry in concert with an observer-as-participant observation method.

A descriptive study is one way in which a researcher can look at a phenomenon in a new way, in order to discover how it works. It can be used to identify the characteristics of a phenomenon by using research data. This can be used to present the nature of an activity and some of the regularities that can help to define it (Blaikie, 2007). The researcher and the participants can cooperate in this process of constructing meaning.

AT, as shown in the previous chapter, is less of a theory and more of a conceptual system (Berglund, 2005). It does not represent a unified system of data-gathering or analysis. The AT perspective on ontology and epistemology direct a researcher to what SCT/AT researchers might view as important data, and indicates how this data might be interpreted (Mercer, 1995). In my study, the central focus was on the group activity. The interpretation focused on activity occurring during certain well-defined events and tended to give greater weight to the holistic meaning of an activity.

AT supports that educational appropriation happens socially in the first instance, within complex systems mediated by tools. Therefore, groups of students that are working together are studied as a system. The activity system of a given group reveals the factors, including contextual factors that impinge on an activity. Such an analysis can separate the central activity (for purposes of analysis) from the learning environment (or context). The participants in my study (each group of three students) were separate from the classroom group because literacy work is most often completed outside of the classroom. It is through this private writing process

for an assessment task that students most often negotiate and ameliorate their literacy awareness and content knowledge.

My stance as a researcher was mostly etic in nature. In observing students conducting their group literacy work, it was not expected that students would be willing to stop regularly to explain the significance of their work. If they had done so, it would have reduced the naturalistic activity.

Invasive questioning would also have changed the processes under investigation. It was not expected that participants would have, if left alone, had the self-awareness to explain their actions, or literacy concepts, in real time. The types of dynamic exchange and literacy categories (writing, content, context) were labelled by me. I was able to follow their activities and tried to understand the significance of this work. When I needed more explanation, I was able to ask questions outside of the activity period.

Despite having an etic perspective, I was not judgemental of students' work. I was instead trying to understand the significance of their activity and the nature of the literacy negotiation, in an effort to understand better their processes.

The research design was affected by the place where I would be conducting the study. I was observing students at their university, but I also knew the place and the program well, since I have been working there for 7 years, including 4 years in that very program. This study followed group activity which was relatively brief in nature, and so the research design was cross-sectional. The methods used were common for cross-sectional studies (de Vaus, 2001), and they were designed to gather as much observational data, contextualised through ethnographic data, about literacy processes, in the time allowed. Ethnographic methods were used to improve the ecological validity of this study (Schultz, 2006).

As the following section will explain, I was primarily interested in naturally-occurring data derived from the participants' writing work. This work formed the bulk of the data. However, other methods were needed in order to aid my understanding of the issues which arose.

3.5.1 Activity Theory ontology

Social constructivism (including AT) presents an ontology that views reality as being socially constructed by individuals. AT further supports that this individual perception of meaning can

be reflected in the “construction” of an activity. These constructions support the subtle relativist position that reality can only be knowable through people’s minds, which are reflected in socially-constructed meanings (Snape & Spencer, 2003). These constructions are unique and depend on the group (individuals with their own history), the time and the circumstances.

In my study, by extension, individual actors, in group work, compared their personal constructions of their ideas for the purposes of their own task, when they were working together. In this way, they cooperated in constructing a commonly acceptable construction of the task that was reflected in how the task was written. This is important for AT ontology which asserts that knowledge is not a static item in one’s mind (Lave, 2009). For example, if students offer a literacy item for discussion, it could have come to that student in one of two ways. This could have been part of their knowledge base, or it could have arisen solely because of the discussion. Therefore, it is difficult to understand the source of an idea.

As regards group work, activity is considered to be an indication of consciousness. Though AT is a materialist theory, in that it focuses typically on external manifestations of consciousness in activity, more modern iterations, found in applied research, recognise that activities are interactively constructed (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999). Since the object-oriented group work itself is a main object of this research study, then I believe that participants’ perceptions of the activity are important, but less important than the outward manifestations of their activity. In both cases, the participants are constructing their reality.

As to participants’ literacy, it is assumed to be that which is expressed by them in activity because it is the literacy items that they thought to be relevant to the task. That means that my study was interested in how the participants explained the literacy issues that they expressed while constructing their essay. The literacy concepts that participants expressed, while perhaps not knowing the technical name for it, such as literacy meta-language, as well as other subject content and contextual information.

3.5.2 Activity Theory epistemology

The researcher tries to perceive the world as it is seen by the participants. However, observation methods required that the researcher be present during activity, and the interviews necessitated interaction and an awareness of the group activity that had previously transpired. This degree of interaction affected both the participants and the researcher and the data they

constructed together. Therefore, an interpretivist position would accept the fact of interaction between researcher and participants, and be transparent about any perceived effects. This involves a degree of reflexivity (see 3.6.13).

Participants present their interpretation of their activity and its meaning. These interpretations would then be interpreted by the researcher. Qualitative research recognises that the researcher, as any individual, constructs reality in a personal manner. In other words, when a researcher perceives an issue he is constructing an interpretation of what he sees.

This necessitates an understanding of the participants and their activity. That requires a relationship between the researcher and the object (Richards, 2003). In this way the researcher develops an understanding of the perspectives of the participants. As the focus of my study of literacy work is on the student, it is the student's perception of literacy which is important, as students are required to interpret the tutor's task and feedback, and otherwise learn about literacy through writing. This is expressed by students in their literacy discourse. This is why I place emphasis on students' language use and how it is to be interpreted. Therefore, from a subjectivist point of view (Snape & Spencer, 2003), I understand that the researcher and the participants impact on each other, which can have an effect on the data.

In presenting the data, I reflected on my interpretations of participants' utterances by making the participants' meanings explicit (through presenting quotations of their discussions), before analysing them. This allowed for my interpretation to be compared with the participants' words. This means that I was required to embrace the possibility of multiple realities.

The qualitative analysis also contextualises the data and interpretations, and attempts to explain their meaning. Therefore, the analyst must construct an explanation of the events (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999: 10). That includes the activity system, which was created inductively based on the researcher's understanding of the participants (with whom he co-constructs a perception of reality) and the research context, presented as an AT construct, the Activity System. This is the way that AT is both a culturally and a historically-mediated analytical framework, and yet still one which is situated in the local context (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999: 9). This system, however, was a creation of the researcher, who is not considered a neutral viewer of the context (Richards, 2003).

As this is a literacy study, a researcher may want to characterise the activity therein as learning. Post-positivist research would approach literacy learning as a social construction. However, that same construction of events could be interpreted in other, more critical ways

that do not accept learning, as an internal process, as being epistemologically understandable. Therefore, interpretations of group work need to be based on the available activity data. When participants exchange ideas for the purpose of completing their essay task, they are comparing their perspectives on literacy to achieve the best result that was acceptable to them, based on the demands placed on them by their essay task. In so doing, they negotiate and try to bring about a solution that they all can agree on. This type of agreement can be interpreted as an instance of new *understanding* (Mercer, 1995). For my study, this meant that I looked for any indications of increased understanding resulting from activities. This can be indicated in language use, both verbal and written.

AT epistemology presents human activity as a system (Table 3). This collates factors of the groups' dynamic, as mentioned above (Figure 2). The Group Activity System, following Engeström (1987), is for a description of the sub-categories (derived inductively) as they relate to the participating groups. Due to a lack of space, only a selection of these categories were used as the basis of the analysis. There were two reasons why the system (sub-) categories were chosen. Firstly, the categories of the ET analysis (Mercer, 1995), represented the negotiation patterns, and are in bold. The other relevant categories of my expanded analysis (see Table 11) are underlined:

SUBJECT: <u>the three participants in a given group</u> (including each participant's personal agency- history, personal goals within the task activity, affect) and <u>group dynamics</u> (power, deference, support, self- assessment, other- assessment, misunderstanding)
TOOLS: <u>Psychological tools: the use of language</u> , such as: negotiation ; (perceptions of) <u>literacy and disciplinary genre</u> ; <u>relevant content awareness (including research methods)</u> ; (reference to) <u>relevant tutor guidance</u> . Physical tools: computers (text software, the Internet), writing implements; paper; textbook (and other sources of subject content); research data; <u>tutor's written feedback</u> ; <u>written drafts of an essay</u> ; <u>notes from classroom activities</u> ; <u>notes written during literacy activity</u>
RULE: <u>classroom/disciplinary/program/university-wide (explicit or implicit) rules regarding how to write</u> (i.e. plagiarism rules); assessment (the marking regime, marking criteria, <u>tutor's relevant use of the disciplinary genre</u>)
COMMUNITY: all members of the classroom group (tutor, students); and the wider university disciplinary community; pre-Masters Foundation program (including literacy tutors); the university
DIVISION OF LABOUR: the role played by each member of a group, throughout the task, individually, or as a part of the group work. Tutor (for classroom group) – relevant classroom functions (teaching, assessment, facilitating learning, <u>task feedback, guidance on the task</u>)
OBJECT: (a shared understanding of) success in a particular course (including <u>their essay task document</u>)
OUTCOME: an essay draft, or drafts, in response to the essay task

Table 3 The literacy group activity system (categories and sub-categories)

AT ontology and epistemology see that dynamic activity is affected by the contextual nature of activity, represented as a system. In order to discover the items for each category of any activity system, Mwanza's model of questions could have been used (Mwanza, 2002). The above list is not exhaustive.

The *Subject* of the activity was the group of three participants (in each of three groups). The system itself represents the context of their work. AT does not look upon individual actors as working alone. In the groups' activity, the three participants chose to work together on the completion of an essay task.

Their driving motivation over the long-term, the *Object*, was success in their studies, i.e. a certificate in their pre-Masters foundation course. In this way, the Business Studies class that the participants were involved in together, over a whole semester, was part of that Object, which, as an Object, had a flexible meaning particular to each participant. It is for this reason that the Object, in abstract intellectual activities, is harder to conceptualise for participants and for researchers (Engeström & Escalante, 1996: 360).

The Object is not a conscious goal, in the short-term sense (Foot, 2002), but its pursuit leads the participant(s) to a number of (relatively) short-term *Outcomes*. Within the Object for the groups, there existed the task document which became the driver for the short-term Outcome,

an essay draft. It is what brought them together and provided the immediate motivation for their discussion exchanges. The task drove the dialectic that included the Tool of academic literacy. Explained in another way, participants' motivation for activity is embedded in the Object (Li, 2013), as the essay task was embedded in the Business Studies class, and that in turn was embedded in the certificate course.

It should be noted that the literacy work that was sought here was not the explicit goal of the participants. Literacy is often an implicit, or "procedural" tool that is rarely "declarative", or mentioned explicitly (Tardy, 2009: 29). Indeed, research has shown that the students' focus is most often on the content part of the task (see Yang, 2014 for a collation of research).

Participants' work towards an Object is mediated by *Tools* which are either in physical form or psychological form, such as language. This mediation is said to aid in the transformation process. The language evident in the group work was of two basic forms. There was the spoken language of their discussions and the written language (i.e. an indication of academic literacy) that they used to produce their essay.

Their essay was viewed as a shared task and that means that the groups divided the work amongst themselves (*Division of Labour*), whether explicitly or not. It is important to note the role played by members in a functioning group as this has an effect on the discussion and the resulting outcome. Although the task was a goal for the students, the tutor played a role in many small ways in this activity as well, most clearly through the instructions given about the task.

This indicates how the subject and their task existed within a *Community* that gave meaning to their activity. The participants all belonged to the same class, and the class had its own activity system, of which the assessment task was a central facet. AT views any cultural activity (such as education) as having its own history, which affects the activity by providing a framework and rules. A university discipline is a context where learning took place, but this context has evolved over time, and has norms which students must adjust to.

A dynamic activity system is seen as having the potential for any number of inner contradictions. It is one of the tasks of a group to overcome or resolve those contradictions in the process of an activity. These contradictions push the group to find new solutions.

3.5.3 The unit of analysis

The unit of analysis in case study is centred on the place, time and people. However, in AT, the unit of analysis is the activity. The unit of analysis, what is within the study and what is outside of the study, develops during a study, as more data emerges. This is part of the learning process for a researcher. Analytical induction is what aids the process of the location or construction of the unit of analysis. In complex situations, it may be hard to separate the phenomenon that is the unit of analysis from the context. In some ways, literacy appropriation is “not readily distinguishable from its context,” (Yin, 2003: 4). This is due to the myriad influences on writing that come from the wider personal and educational contexts of the participants.

However, the work of the individual groups was as well-defined as possible, when it was a task occurring concurrent to other learning events (e.g. classroom lessons). It is what Engeström (2001: 140) has called a “well-bounded” community of practice in the form of a “task-oriented” team because of its members’ desire to collaborate for the purposes of learning.

3.5.4 Setting

This research activity is set in a British university, in the Greater London area. The participants’ full-time study program was an HSS foundation course, at pre-Masters level, organised by the language-support unit of that university. The program begins every year in September of the first semester, when all of the students begin their classes. The program, accredited by the university, runs for three semesters, and includes relevant literacy classes in academic literacy, research project writing, and grammar, for example. These courses provide lessons in general academic literacy to the students.

The program had a syllabus, assessment and assessment criteria with a requirement for achieving a particular passing grade in the academic literacy courses and the optional disciplinary courses in order for students to graduate to the Masters course of their choice (e.g. Business or Economics- see Appendix 1). The option course chosen by a student indicated the student’s preferred postgraduate program. The disciplinary option courses, which lasted for 3 semesters, are run by the relevant department in the university. It is the departments’ choice as to how to prepare students for entry to their department, what grades to expect, and how to mark their assessments. Therefore, these are true option courses, and not literacy courses. The

tutors, representatives of the departments, set and marked assessments according to the criteria of their departments. The classroom group of my study was the option class for Business Studies. It was a class taught by a tutor who was a holder of a PhD in Business Studies.

The students that register for the foundation program are, in the vast majority, L2-English speakers, from a range of overseas countries, while Chinese candidates form a large sub-category. The typical candidate has a first degree, of which the subject of study varies. The students were arranged in a number of different Academic Literacy courses. Their Academic Literacy classroom group had no bearing on the option class they were registered for. Therefore, many students were members of particular Academic Literacy classroom groups, and also part of certain option-course classroom groups.

My study began contact with the participants in their second semester. Therefore, they had been registered in their literacy and option classes for more than one semester, and had been in the UK for at least 5 months. For some groups, this task was the first task that the group had co-operated on together, but not for all groups.

These participants had their own educational histories, as will be revealed below. Past educational experiences may play a role in how a student adjusts to a new environment. Any change of country or learning environment will mean the building of new understandings of learning, education and language. That may mean that they viewed a task or a process in a different way from other people in the same group (Basharina, 2007).

3.5.5 Sampling

It was decided that the sampling procedure was not going to be particularly representative of the classroom group, as this was not of great concern. This descriptive study would not provide generalisable data. Indeed, it was known that the unique nature of each group (of three students) would be an important variable in the description of the data. The composition of this HSS class was varied in nationality, age and gender among other factors. That made for literacy groups which were each unique in their composition. As foreign-language speakers of English, all of these students had the key characteristic I was looking for.

3.5.6 Negotiation of access

An HSS class was sought wherein a tutor and a sufficient number of students were found willing to participate in the study. I needed to formally request permission from many people or groups before beginning so that my work would be publically understood and permitted in case there were any objections. I first asked the tutor for access to his class, and arranged a day and time. In order to do so, I felt I needed to request permission to approach the tutors from the particular program. This was granted in writing, by email.

It was also necessary for that university to know that I was conducting researching involving volunteers from amongst its students. I approached the director of ethics by email and asked permission. In this case I also explained my plans, sample and research procedures. I explained that the study would be conducted outside of class time with volunteers, and that there would be no effect on non-participants. Prior to this, my research had passed an Ethics panel clearance from the University of Bath, where I needed to explain my plans, sample and research procedures.

A visit with one such HSS class, after class time, allowed the researcher to introduce the study to the tutor and students, introduce himself as a literacy tutor and researcher, and explain the ethics rules that the research study was to abide by (below). A questionnaire (Q1-see Appendix 2 for all questionnaires), given at that time to all students, enquired about students' educational and linguistic background, and their experiences of and opinions of literacy work and group work. The questionnaire form was also a permission form, where a person could indicate an interest in becoming part of the study. From this group, the participants were chosen from among those willing to participate.

3.5.7 Ethics

Social research relies upon the goodwill of volunteers in order to have a window into their worlds. It is therefore important that these volunteers are not only treated with the greatest degree of care possible, but that the researcher is seen to do so. That means that permission should be sought from the volunteers and those directly associated with them, who have some power over them, by virtue of their teaching position. That includes institutional figures, such as tutors and administrators, in the case of educational research environments.

It was necessary for me to understand the wider context of the participants, and the educational environment. My preventive measures were taken with a feeling of moral duty to my volunteers. I felt that honesty and seeking permission from all concerned was the best policy.

The potential for a substantial risk to the volunteers could have been perceived by those volunteers by virtue of my knowing their tutor. As perceived by me only, this risk may have arisen from the fact that I shared an office with their tutor (among other tutors), though I was not involved in their program. The volunteers were in the process of obtaining a certificate that would decide their future educational choices. So, it was important that I at least state clearly that my research would have no bearing on their studies, and that the data from meetings would stay secret.

As regards the volunteers themselves, I also needed to be clear about my ethics. The ethical standards were set for my study (BERA, 2004). I informed the students about my research procedures, who would have access to the data, and that I may use the anonymised data for publication.

In the first instance, the participants' consent was sought in writing (Questionnaire 1). The participants were informed that they could stop their participation and withdraw their support at any time, for any reason, without explanation. In case the request for their signature was questioned, I (and the document) advised them that the permission document was binding on me only, in that I only needed their signature to show to others that volunteers had registered willingly.

The consent form (and my initial talk in front of their classroom group with the tutor) expressed the nature of the full confidentiality and privacy that they could expect from me. They were told of the transcription of the activities that would be labelled with pseudonyms. I stated that video was required to examine the dynamics of the group work. I also ensured them that no detriment would befall them from anything said in these sessions. The video data were kept in a safe place and destroyed after the research study was completed and bound. The participants were all thanked by email, and in person. I believe that the research of their literacy activities may have benefitted the participants, and at the very least would not hinder their attainment.

3.5.8 The participant groups' literacy work context

The groups' classroom tutor had set the group size at 3. This had also been done in a previous exercise with that class, the term before. Therefore, the intervention of the researcher was not required in the setting of groups. A sufficient number of groups (three) was found, in order to provide for enough variety in group composition. This was advantageous because my professional experience of classroom activity for the type of activity (writing), a group size of three was ideal. The number of participants was felt to be enough to produce useful data, if the groups were intent upon cooperating on their essay task. Stahl (2006: 418) argues that small groups (i.e. "several" members) are ideal for a focus on singular tasks, and the observation of intersubjectivity and group cognition. As the numbers in a group increase, so does the risk of overlapping conversation. This would have caused some difficulty in recording and comprehending the group work.

The setting for the literacy group work was outside of classroom time and space. The location of the sessions was in an empty classroom, on the university campus. These group sessions were in an as-natural-as-possible setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), in a classroom-like environment (Wells, 1986). Even though this writing task was meant to be private (out-of-classroom) writing, the group nature of the task meant that it was required for the group to meet in public. The groups all chose to work at their university as they spend 4 or 5 days a week there, many hours each day for classes, lectures and library study. Literacy group work of this type typically included a writing tool (computer), ancillary documents (e.g. books) and space for work (tables). Although the group meetings were arranged amongst the member, the groups allowed me to book classroom space for them to conduct their literacy sessions, so as to provide a quiet working and research environment.

3.5.9 Participants

My study is based on the observation of three separate literacy groups of three students each. The setting of the membership of these groups was voluntary. The participants had chosen to be partnered for the purpose of combining their efforts in the writing of the assigned task. This section will present each group by describing the members. All of their names have been changed to protect their identities. Many of the key background questionnaire data (from Questionnaire 1) appear in Table 4.

Name	Lit. lang.s	Family history of university (first attendee)	Highest Angloph degree	Opinion/ experience of groupwork	Exper. of long essay (Eng or L1)	Difficulty- Business essay	own English writing	tutor feedback
Hin (1)	2	sibling	none	helpful/ no	yes	v difficult	smw sat	v hlpfl
Su (1)	3	parent	u-graduate	helpful/ yes	yes	smw diff.	good	v hlpfl
Yan (1)	3	parent	u-graduate	not helpful/ yes	yes	smw diff.	smw sat	v hlpfl
Cher (2)	3	parent	u-graduate	v helpful/ ?	yes	smw diff.	not sat	hlpfl
Hank (2)	2	sibling	none	helpful/ yes	yes	smw diff.	good	smw hlpfl
Vana (2)	2	sibling	u-graduate	helpful/ yes	yes	smw diff.	smw sat	hlpfl
Cheng (3)	2	parent	u-graduate	smw helpful/no	yes	difficult	smw sat	hlpfl
Fan (3)	2	parent	u-graduate	helpful/ yes	yes	smw diff	smw sat	hlpfl
Zhan (3)	2	sibling	none	v helpful/no	yes	smw diff	smw sat	hlpfl

Table 4 Questionnaire 1 data¹

This allows for a review of aspects of all groups' background and opinions that will help in setting certain baseline issues. The participants all have literacy in at least 2 languages, and experience of long essays. Their family histories indicate that they are not the first from their families to go to university. Six participants already have a first degree from an Anglophone institution. Though not all participants have experience of group work in writing tasks, all but one of them was favourable to group work. This likely indicates that participants (with one exception) would likely be trying to cooperate with fellow members. The Business essay appeared to all members as being a challenge. All but one participants were at least somewhat satisfied with their writing. The fact that no participant claimed to have excellent writing would tend to make them appear somewhat open to discussions with and advice from other members, or willing to learn from their experience, and perhaps willing to contribute. Lastly, all participants looked favourably upon tutor feedback.

¹ Key: v- very; smw-somewhat; diff- difficult; u-graduate- undergraduate; Angloph- Anglophone; Exper.-experience; sat- satisfactory; hlpfl- helpful; ?- not known; long essay- 5000 words or more

The individual groups and their members are discussed next, derived mostly from Questionnaire 1:

Group 1

This temporary group consisted of 3 females of a mixture of national backgrounds. They were all non-native speakers of English.

Member 1- Hin was a female, in her early twenties, of Vietnamese nationality. Hin had a Business undergraduate degree from her home country, in her native language, Vietnamese. Hin was acknowledged as having the most experience in Business studies by her partners.

Member 2- Su, was a female, in her early 20s, of Turkish nationality. Su had an Engineering degree from her home country, in English, and this degree had some Business components. Su controlled the typing during both sessions.

Member 3- Yan was a female, in her early 20s, of Taiwanese nationality. Yan had a degree in an unrelated field, from her home country, in one of her native languages, Chinese.

Group 2

This temporary group consisted of 3 people, of both genders, and a mixture of nationalities. They were all non-native speakers of English.

Member 1- Cher was a female, in her early 20s, of Chinese nationality, from Hong Kong. Cher had a Business degree from her home country, in English. She was seeking to study an MSc in Marketing.

Member 2- Hank was a male, in his early 20s, of Brazilian nationality. Hank had a degree from his home country, in his native language, Brazilian Portuguese. He had worked in his family's factory and thus had some relevant knowledge of aspects of business.

Member 3- Vana was a female, in early 20s, of Indonesian nationality. Vana had a degree, in English, from her home country. She had also worked in an international firm and so had relevant work experience. Vana was considered by the others to be the member with the most experience of business studies and writing. The other members gave Vana control of the typing.

Group 3

This temporary group consisted of 3 people, of both genders, from one country. They were all non-native speakers of English.

Member 1- Cheng was a female, in her early 20s, of Chinese nationality. Cheng had a degree, studied in English, from her home country. Cheng was considered by other members as the one with the best writing skills. The other members preferred for her to control the typing of the essay.

Member 2- Fan was a male, in his early 20s, of Chinese nationality. Fan had a degree in an unknown subject, in English, from his home country.

Member 3- Zhan was a male, in his early twenties, of Chinese nationality. Zhan had a degree, studied in Chinese, from his home country.

3.6 Methods

This section will present the methods used, and the reasons behind those choices. The research instruments were chosen to answer the research question as fully as possible and provide the data to describe the events, interpret their meanings as literacy work, and to explain the significance of the activities for the participants' processes.

As this was a cross-sectional study, of a relatively short duration, it was necessary to approach the gathering of data in a careful fashion. In AT, the activity is the unit of analysis. So, focus was on the group's processes. Description of the culture of the group was therefore not as central, and not as thorough as a longer, ethnographic study would have been. The temporary nature of the group itself would not allow for such a cultural analysis.

As this was a mixed-methods study, there was a multitude of data sources, of two basic types. The naturally-occurring data was derived from the activity that the participants created. This observation process was designed to record, as best as possible, the interaction between participants, their discourse patterns, their use of language, and how this led to the furthering of their task. So as to minimise my effect on the data, I was an observer-as-participant, recording the events on various types of media.

I preferred that status, to go with my status, in the eyes of participants as a literacy tutor to help with the generated data. I presented brief questionnaires which were completed in the

periods before and after the participants' literacy events. This type of data was an intervention into the course of events, but was a brief, silent, individual activity. Specifically, the questionnaires were designed to have the participants recount their thoughts about the literacy event, in writing, through open-ended questions. Unlike the literacy activity, and the interviews (below), the questionnaires were completed individually. Such activity could have caused participants to mentally reconstruct their interpretations.

This helped the researcher achieve a level of understanding that would otherwise not have been possible. The data from this gave insights into the participants' perceptions of and beliefs about literacy and the task they were completing (McNaughton et al., 2014), and the meaning they gave to said tasks, without raising any extraneous issues.

The methods I had decided to employ were flexible in order to be in concert with the environment I was entering. The research followed the path set by the participants and their activities. This is exemplified by the fact that I was required by circumstances to re-think my perception of the participants' interpretation of the activity. It was not possible beforehand for me to know everything that could possibly occur.

I was also able to prepare my interview technique to reflect the fact that students were not writing descriptive accounts of their work as I had hoped, in their questionnaires, during the writing period (recording sessions). I therefore was required to take notes for stimulated recall interviews.

In studying these groups, I did not play a role in organising the groups' meetings. The literacy group meetings were already part of the participants' routine for the writing of their essay, and I was allowed to observe. The observation activities were as unobstructed as was possible while still allowing for a researcher's presence.

As AT supports the understanding of social cognition, in situ, and contextualised, culturally and historically, it is necessary to study the normal workings of that institution and the personal and everyday linguistic practices of its members, which is step 1 (Barton, 2000- Table 5). This is the domain of their Business Studies class that is a disciplinary course, within their Foundation program. This was aided by the fact that I had taught on a previous iteration of the program that the participants were completing, as a literacy tutor (see 3.5.8, 3.5.9). I used the criteria below, in steps two to five, to study the participants' activity environment and this helped to contextualise the immediately surroundings of the literacy work, and the observation data. The following section will present all the background investigation of the research setting.

1 identify domain(s)
2 observe visual environment
3 identify particular literacy events and document them
4 identify texts and analyse practices around texts
5 interview people about practices, sense making

Table 5 Steps in researching literacy practices (Barton, 2000: 170)

3.6.1 The students' literacy task process

The groups were given a coursework assessment task (see Appendix 3) by their Business Studies tutor for which the students, grouped in threes, were to produce a text. This text was referred to by both students and tutor as an essay. However, according to recent research, it falls within the Explanation (student written coursework assignment) genre (Gardner & Nesi, 2013). This is due to the neutral stance, the systematic analysis of key aspects of their disciplinary knowledge, and the description of a business. However, for ease of comprehension, the task will be referred to as an essay.

This essay involved both theoretical and empirical aspects (Nesi & Gardner, 2012, Gardner & Nesi, 2013). The empirical part of the essay was to be derived from simple interviews with a manager of a business in the London area, and associated documentation providing primary research data.

The essay writing process involved group meetings during which students planned, wrote and edited their material. The various group members also wrote parts of their essays individually, at other locations and there may have been other group meetings that the researcher was not party to.

The whole writing process occurred over the period of approximately one month, during early 2013. Certain preparatory events had occurred before my research began. Firstly, the empirical research study (for the students' essays) had started before my literacy research took place, but was still continuing during my research study. Secondly, the groups had presented their essay plans in the classroom group, amongst the other participating groups in my study, and among non-participating groups, with the aid of a PowerPoint text they had created, and for which

they received feedback from the tutor. This had the added benefit of allowing students to learn from other groups.

The groups needed to meet to work on the essay together, at least for part of their task period. It is this need to meet which granted an opportunity for their work to be observed.

3.6.2 Research Schedule

The data gathering process for each group occurred separately from that of the other groups. The data gathering procedures were organised chronologically to provide a combination of natural and generated data. In the time period given to writing this task, there were two group literacy activity events that were witnessed, with a similar process each time. There were two other meetings, in the post-writing period, during which interviews only were taken.

The schedule (Table 6) reflects the data-gathering meetings for each group. Data-gathering literacy activity sessions occurred two times for each group. The first two sessions occurred during the writing period that the participants had given to writing their essay task. The first meeting occurred during an early planning and writing stage; the second meeting occurred during the editing stage, nearer the deadline.

In each of those meetings, the participants were already working on their essay task in situ, while exceptionally, the group and researcher met at the beginning of their session. These sessions occurred in an empty teaching classroom. As such private writing sessions are difficult to find occurring surreptitiously, the researcher's visit had been previously arranged with the group.

Stage/ period	Week 2	Week 6	Week 7	Week 10	Week 13
Activities, in order					
1	investigative questionnaire (Q1)	initial research questionnaire (Q2)	questionnaire (Q2b)	questionnaire (Q4)	reflexive interview ²
2		literacy work session	literacy work session	reflexive interview ³	
3		reflexive quest/aire (Q3)	reflexive quest/aire (Q3)		
4			reflexive interview		
Interview stimulus		field notes	field notes	completed essay; video	tutor's summative feedback; essay
Other data, post- session		essay draft (gr1) outline (gr2,gr3)	essay draft (gr1, gr2, gr3)		

Table 6 Research timetable, research methods and data sources for Groups 1, 2 and 3

The research sessions began with each student completing her/his own questionnaire (Q2 or Q2b- see below) which inquired about participants' perspectives on the literacy activities to follow with contextual questions for the coming session, or work that had been done in between sessions.

This then led to the group literacy activity, with the group around a large table, lasting approximately one hour (recordings of between 44 and 82 minutes), wherein participants worked on their essay task aided by those students' own documents (e.g. essay drafts, a computer). The researcher was observing as a participant-as-observer during these activities.

² For Group 2, only Cher and Hank were present. For Group 3, only Cheng and Fu were present. Group 1 was not available.

³ For Group3, only Cheng & Zhan were present. Group 1 was not available.

During session two, at a time agreed between participants and research, the researcher intervened again to end his observation of the activity. The session then ended with individual questionnaires (Q3) for each participant. After the second research session (for each group), a group interview occurred which was designed for participants to reflect on issues that had recently transpired, in both research sessions.

Period	Prior to session 1	Literacy session 1	Period between sessions	Literacy session 2	Post session 2
Literacy activities	-Essay-plan presentation -Research -Reading	-Planning the essay -Writing the essay -Reading	-Writing individual texts -Further research -Consulting tutor	-Editing of essay	-Further editing -Further writing

Table 7 Participants' essay task work timeline, as it relates to research timetable

Table 7 is designed to explain the organisation of the students' literacy process for the duration of their essay-writing process, with reference to how they fitted in to the research process. It indicates the activities before, during and after the two main research (literacy) sessions. The activities that occurred during the two main research sessions were observed by the researcher, while activities that occurred outside of the research environment were found mentioned in transcripts of the research sessions, or were reported during the interviews.

The first research session was early in their writing process. The groups had not, by that time, met together, outside of class, for the writing of the task in question. At this stage, the students had written little for their essay, but had presented their project to their entire classroom group. The general purpose of literacy session 1, for the groups, as derived from questionnaires and observation, was to examine the task, gather their data and readings, interpret how they would answer the questions in the task and prepare to proceed with the writing process. The tendency was for groups to assign to members the writing of a segment of text to be done individually. There were however, some deviations from this general plan. Group 1 spent much of their time in session 1 writing the task, while the other two groups did little or no writing during session 1.

There was a gap of about one week between the two research sessions. In the intervening period, between the first and second sessions, the groups met together again to write and also, had, separately, done some individual writing. There were also exchanges of texts by way of the Internet; email, and sometimes through Facebook. Some of the groups also had further primary research to conduct with the company that they were studying for their essay.

The second research session occurred at a time which was within the final week prior to the deadline for completion. This stage was, for the groups generally an editing stage, though there were minor exceptions. For example, Group 3 also used this session to complete parts (e.g. the Introduction) of the essay that they had not completed in their other individual work or group meetings, to that point.

There were three well-defined activities that the groups participated in; planning, writing, editing. Planning, as a part of the writing process that involves the least writing, was conducted by all 3 groups, and a sizeable part of that planning occurred in research session 1. This work that was observed was therefore collaborative. The writing stage transpired in a variety of ways for the groups (Table 7). If the work was done together, then it was collaborative, as seen with Group 1. The other groups' individual writing (between sessions 1 and 2) was co-operative in nature as they worked separately. The editing stage (partly seen in each group's session 2) was more than a simple combination of contributions. There was discussion, as the extracts will show. Therefore, this group work was collaborative writing. Therefore, Groups 2 and 3 only collaborated on planning and editing activities. Nevertheless, since most of the research sessions were taken up with collaborative writing, their extracts are all considered to be collaborative writing (Stahl et al., 2006).

Following the task's submission deadline, two reflexive interviews were held. The first of those, the third research session, chronologically, occurred soon after the due date for the essay. This interview was designed to review the participants' process and their impressions of the work they had done together to contextualise the process, task and group goals. This was done through an individual questionnaire (Q3) and a group interview. The fourth meeting occurred after a summative assessment and feedback form had been given to the groups by the tutor. This interview was designed to reflect on the tutor's feedback and what it meant for their literacy work and literacy appropriation. This also aided in the understanding of the local disciplinary literacy standards.

Such a recursive study is needed in order to understand better the disciplinary literacy norms of the group (Lillis, 2008) and in order to better understand aspects of the process of literacy appropriation. These multiple visits also allowed for progress to be seen regarding the task completion, and to see different stages in the process and the literacy work that was in evidence at that stage.

All the data from the above methods was placed in a unique data file for each group. This consists of the transcribed video-recordings of the literacy group activities; the individual questionnaires (Q1,Q2,Q2b,Q3,Q4), transcribed audio recordings of the interviews, an essay draft after session 1, a final draft and the tutor's assessment and feedback on the essay.

3.6.3 Data-gathering instruments

My research question required compatible research methods. It was necessary to choose a multiple-methods process which was compatible with a social-constructivist paradigm (McNaughton et al., 2014). Prior (2004), due to the difficulty in apprehending all aspects of the writing process, sees value in combining research methods. Therefore, the choice of methods were a combination of ethnographic-type methods.

While it is possible for classes to discuss literacy and even for students to work together, discussing drafts in groups (McCarthy, 1987: 238), the nature of most writing tasks in university means that it typically requires individual private study, and individual submissions. This means that the phenomenon of private literacy work would normally be difficult to observe occurring naturally (Yin, 1984 in Punch, 2009).

Previous methods of observing tertiary literacy have been found wanting. Fluency, or the rate at which one writes, could be rated (Latif, 2013), but methodologies of real-time assessment are not unified, and it is not thought that writing fluency can clearly reflect literacy, and literacy level. Various methods of 'concurrent' (Prior, 1998: 180) data gathering have attempted to capture every step in a writing process. Firstly, computer programs can follow a text as it is being made (Prior, 1998: 172), including individual key strokes. There is some doubt as to whether endeavouring to discover every key-stroke of a student is necessary, adding concern for ethics to those of feasibility. While the language keyed on a computer may aid in understanding an essay text, it may not allow for an understanding of thought processes and literacy knowledge being brought to bear during these actions.

Secondly, think-aloud protocols for real-time writing observation (Prior, 1998: 180f, McCarthy, 1987) and spelling observation (Sabey, 1999) are a process where the student is made to announce every thought process and every word written. This could be unnecessarily obtrusive. The respondent's willingness to partake in such processes would not mean that such a process would provide valuable, i.e. realistic data. Such a research method would provide the

personal micro-level analysis of writing and literacy of one person, but in so doing, may inhibit or alter writing patterns by requiring speech to be produced that otherwise would not have occurred. That would risk inviting a form of observer's paradox (Labov, 1972), that can also afflict any research requiring observation.

What the above methods lacked was a concept of the relationship between thought and action. The researchers were trying to force thoughts to the surface to aid in the interpretation of the actions that they were observing. AT may have partial answers to this problem. The epistemology of AT purports that consciousness is visible in activity only. We cannot know what a human's cognition is capable of. Therefore, we can only see the realisation of thoughts in action, if that action is goal-oriented. The participants' need to cooperate necessitates the use of mediational means in the activity.

The activities I observed were dynamic and goal-oriented since they had meaning for the participants. My observation of this group literacy work provided data about the writing, about the realisation of individual thought processes of the participants and about their understanding of issues of literacy because of the social nature of their group activity. Participants were expressing solidarity with the group and using their knowledge to improve the written essay task they shared. This is why I used the following methods.

As is found in classroom research (Storch, 2005: 154), group writing is often limited to the beginning stages (brainstorming or planning), or the final stages of writing—the peer review stage by students themselves. It could be said the preference for much of their group writing projects, for those students, was for the division of a task, and the creation of a text as a private (lone) activity. However, since the students were responsible for writing a unified text, in my study, there was a need for them to discuss some aspects of their text. My study observed many of those aspects.

There were five data gathering methods. The research instruments that will be described below include the activities which were observed and video-recorded, the semi-structured group interviews, held by the researcher, and the individual questionnaires. These five methods were data in their own right, but could also have been used to provide data for stimulated interview questions or as data. They could be classed as either main methods, or preliminary and ancillary methods. The main method was observation.

3.6.4 Observation process

It has been shown that it could be better to study literacy processes in situ, rather than only at second hand (Patton, 1990), generating data from interviews. An AT perspective places emphasis on kinds of talk, and these events were mediated by talk (Mercer, 1995). Even though the group work sessions were not a formal classroom setting, they were a context of learning.

This most important activity was designed for me to witness as much about the literacy activities of the groups as could possibly be interpreted. This method was used to witness the dynamics of the group, the members' negotiation of their real literacy group work task, and the language they used in a naturalistic setting.

In order to be clear about my methods, I need to explain the following factors involved in observation methods (Borg, 2006). In these sessions I classed myself as an observer-as-participant. That means that I was "observing as unobtrusively as possible, engaging in the setting to some extent but usually only for short periods of time," (McNaughton et al., 2014: 246f). I was present so that I could study the situation as it was happening, and so that I would better be able to interpret the events, being that I am a literacy tutor. I was present also to take field notes, operate the camera, and to change the recording media.

My subjects knew that I would be present and knew that I would be recording, as I had explained to them in their class. Although they knew that I was a literacy tutor, I was not to be involved in the participants' activities. I mentioned my profession in the hope of satisfying the curiosity of participants about my interest in literacy.

The participants' work was intended to be as unencumbered by the research process as possible. I fully disclosed the fact that I was observing how student groups worked together on writing. I told the groups that I was not seeking to judge the quality of their work. If participants did try to talk to me, I tried to respond briefly to avoid influencing the events.

However, in AT, the researcher is said to affect any research that s/he is a participant in. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on any possible effect I could have had on the data production, or the quality of the data production.

There were three kinds of observation data created: notes, video media, drafts of participants' work. I took notes during the sessions to add description to the events, and to provide items for the post-writing period stimulated-recall interviews. Therefore, I was using my skills as a teacher and literacy expert in order to be an instrument of data generation.

In each individual observation session (each group individually), the groups arranged themselves around a table or tables, close to one another. They often each brought their own computers, books and class notes. There was use of information media over the internet, and communication sources, like email and social media (Facebook). I was 2 to 3 metres away from the groups, near the video cameras. The session discussions were transcribed word-for word, with descriptive notes, derived from the recordings of the sessions. The sessions were recorded on video media.

3.6.5 Video recordings

It was felt that the video recording of the events would not be intrusive in this day of cameras on phones. In practice, the camera did not draw much attention from participants, and so it is felt that the video was a neutral factor.

The literacy group sessions were recorded on video media in order to document the interaction patterns of activities (Cazden, 2001). This revealed, and retained, specific, detailed evidence on the qualities of group interaction such as the use of source material, the division of labour, and passive participation such as listening. The exchanges that transpired were central to the analysis and it was also necessary to witness and record any contextual information around the activities. This is vital because context shapes understanding and interaction (Mercer, 2000).

3.6.6 Group interviews

Constructivist models of cognition, regarding individuals' or groups' actions, include those people's narratives as a source of meaning for those actions (Larochelle & Bednarz, 1998). Interviews were an activity undertaken for purposes of triangulation, after the observations had ended. The use of such additional sources of data improved the reliability and validity of the interpretations of observational data. Each type of interview had a particular purpose.

Interviews were conducted at two distinct stages in the process. The first stage was after my research of the participants' writing process had ended. Literacy-work sessions 1 and 2 were the two days when I was observing the groups' literacy work. The interview after Session 2 was designed to supplement the observational data. While it is important for a literacy researcher to pay "closer attention to the language people use in the course of what they are

doing,” it is also key to seek participants’ interpretation of the activities in which they were to or had partaken (Lantolf, 2000). This would also provide a chance for participants to reflect on their activity.

After the observation in Session 2, I conducted an interview that functioned as a reflection, for participants, on those activities that occurred in the two periods of observation. This interview was semi-structured and began with the goal of using my observation notes for a stimulated recall. Temporally, this post-observation interview was arranged to occur immediately after the literacy work session recording had ended. Had that interview been delayed, I believed that the participants would have had difficulty recalling relevant actions and motivations. This was due to the speed and complexity of their many literacy activities.

This was necessary in order to investigate the significant events, or to better understand the meaning or purpose of events which had been unclear to me (Gee, 1999). This could have indicated some aspect of their previous working history that would not have been clear to an outsider. The participant and the researcher construct a particular sense of the world of the events that are being discussed. While the interpretation of the observation was mostly left to the researcher, the interview was the chance for the participants to express their perception of events. The participants interpreted their actions, attitudes and reasons for some of their actions. Their use of language allowed for the researcher to understand their way of expressing themselves, which would help with all the analysis of the transcript.

The post-writing stage was not a part of the participants’ writing process. The groups, once having completed their essay, expected to receive feedback, in writing, from their tutor. This would be the end of their learning cycle for this essay task. However, my study is about my attempt to understand the participants’ literacy process within that disciplinary program. That would necessitate two short interviews within which I could investigate other potentially important information about their experiences and their contact with their discipline and its literacy demands. Therefore, the tutor’s feedback was an important document that required an investigation involving me and the groups.

The two supplementary interviews were conducted in the weeks after the completion of the task. The first interview occurred in the week after the groups had submitted their essays. This was a chance for me to enquire about the process, and to verify some interpretations made in the analysis of the activity transcript. The final interview was designed to reflect on the tutor’s feedback. This was another chance to reflect on the task and to assess the participants’

understanding of the tutor's advice about the task, and perhaps the disciplinary genre. For the purposes of the study, I gained permission from participants and the tutor to obtain a copy of the tutor's feedback to each essay. The essay drafts and tutor feedback were used for stimulus in the respective discussions. This reflexive discussion was important, in recognition of the disciplinary literacy standards set by their tutor.

These different types of interviews were designed to help me gain a better understanding of the events that had occurred, from the participants' point of view. It would have been difficult for an outsider to apprehend the meaning of literacy issues of a particular academic discipline from observation alone, being that disciplinary literacy is a complex of intellectual demands associated with the classroom (and disciplinary) context and students' personal contexts.

Even though I have familiarity with their Foundation program, and a background in tertiary literacy that includes observing students in action, it was still necessary to discover the links between participants' activities, the meaning for those participants, and the researcher's perspective, seeking explanation of these issues. This provided a form of verification of etic opinions. This also allowed the flexibility for participants to redirect the discussion to issues of their choice.

3.6.7 Individual questionnaires

Another additional data source took the form of questionnaires, of which there were four types. All of them were individual questionnaires, which were to be completed by each respondent. This provided some triangulation of themes when compared to the group interview data and the observation data.

The first questionnaire (Q1) was given to all of the students in the classroom group who were present. The data from this questionnaire provided personal background information on language and educational, and students' experience of group work in school settings. Since all the participants had completed one, this data formed a baseline and the basis of a personal description.

The following questionnaire were for the participants only. These were given to participants to complete, individually, but in the same space where they were working. The second questionnaire type (Q2) was distributed before the first observation session. This questionnaire had open-ended questions about the participant's plans and goals for the upcoming discussion

and some brief background questions about writing and their group. Questionnaire 2b (Q2b) was similarly given before the second observation session. These had a smaller set of questions that enquired about their activities, as individuals and as a group, between session 1 and session 2, and their goals for that second session.

The third questionnaire (Q3), which was completed individually by participants after both the first and second activity Sessions, provided more contextual information about their group discussions which had just transpired, about any significant achievements. The last questionnaire (Q4) was a set of reflective questions about the process, after the submission of their essays.

In each of these questionnaires, the participants were asked to give their opinion on group work as a method for working on a literacy task, from any perspective they wanted to. These questionnaires allowed participants, individually, to formulate their own reflective analysis about what had just transpired, as a kind of reflexive writing (Roebuck, 2000). This would provide a greater grounding in their attitudes toward group work that helped with interpreting the observation data.

3.6.8 Pilot study

The main study represents a research framework of components derived from the research question that includes a methodology, research design, methods and analytical systems. This framework was developed after I staged and analysed a pilot study. The whole framework was tested in order to inspect the applicability of the components, the sampling (and population), and examine the type of data that could be derived from observing a group activity.

As a whole, when a research question becomes a framework, the central issue is whether the resulting framework is valid. In other words, it is necessary to test whether the data derived from the methods are close enough to those which my methodology claims they should be.

A pilot study was organised to test as many variables as possible. It also allowed me to trial all research methods (observation, recording, transcription, data analysis, interviews and questionnaires). Some key literacy findings are included in the Results chapter. The knowledge which was derived from the process of this pilot study caused me to change many of the key methods into their present form. The improvements to the research methods resulting from the pilot study were many as will be explained.

The pilot study provided 58 minutes of group literacy discussion, as well as interviews and questionnaires, taken over two sessions, spaced 2 weeks apart. In total there was one activity session (questionnaires, interviews, observation) which occurred while the participants were in their essay writing period. The second session was a stimulated-recall interview session which occurred after the essay had been submitted. As such, it was more like the reflexive interviews which were part of the main study.

The pilot study participants were chosen from a university in the south of England. The students were Masters-level students in Education, studying the learning and teaching of language. Students from this literacy field were chosen because of their subject's relation to subjects I have studied. That means to say that I would be more able to interpret their disciplinary literacy discussions as I have studied similar theory and written essays. These participants, being interested or involved in teaching, were fairly conversant in concepts of learning and teaching, and provided rich data. The resulting data caused me to rethink my conception of my target participants, and about what activity I could expect from my participants. For example, literacy meta-language awareness can depend on personal history.

The research data gathering session plan was tested in its entirety. The process and chronological order for this type of data gathering was found to be appropriate, and has remained unchanged. This is because the data generated from the interviews and questionnaires were seen to provide some context to the observational data. The observation and the video recording techniques were tested and techniques were subsequently improved, such as sound generation. I noticed that audio recordings could also be added, from closer vantage points without being intrusive.

The study of the data transcripts helped in the delineation of extracts as somewhat coherent segments of transcript wherein the group were discussing an item of writing/literacy. I was able to interpret participants' negotiating activities and their use of language. There arose an interesting component that was not expected. That was the element of the challenging of one person's comment by another person (Mercer, 1995). I expected that such challenges would be viewed by the listener as rude. In fact, these types of exchanges were very fruitful, and formed a large part of the analytical framework for the main study. This also allowed me to study the ways in which understanding is indicated in participants' dialogue.

The pilot study showed me how difficult it is to find instances of the generation of common understanding. The group were, each, writing their own individual essay topics, for the same

subject class. If a group is discussing the writing of an essay, in theory, but not actually cooperating on writing the same essay document, there is less likelihood that the participants will work diligently on creating common understanding. That understanding will also not likely lead to any writing, or even editing of a text, because they do not have a common goal.

The pilot group discussed aspects of their ideas about writing their essays, or particular problems. They did show each other some of their writing, and a feedback message from their tutor. This was often part of a complex discussion. Therefore, their writing/literacy discussions were indicative of ET. The participants indicated signs that they had gained a new understanding. Therefore, the framework of ET was found to be useful for my study.

This encouraged me to find a group for the main study that was working on a single essay between the members. This did not guarantee that the group would write their essay in the research sessions. It did however provide a more direct impetus, or goal, for the participants that would drive their discussions, in the form of the common task and the common written document. This is what I thought would create more discussion in all the facets of the writing of an essay; planning, writing, editing.

The nature of the pilot study literacy group meeting was also improved upon. The pilot study group were classmates, but were not partners in writing, or any other task that the particular classroom group were doing. Therefore, the literacy event that I observed was not natural. This was also important because of the type of talk that often dominated the pilot group session. Participants were talking at length about past teaching and learning experiences that were new to their interlocutors. That indicates a new relationship because there was considerable work being done amongst participants for the building of rapport.

The testing of the interview process allowed for the use of techniques of note-taking (taken from the observation) as a stimulus for discussion in interviews. Key events which seemed indicative of literacy discussion were captured on paper. I was often able to add to them my thoughts on the issue, or about some aspect of context that I had noticed. Here, I refer to the physical context and also the perceived context of the group as students of a particular program (Mercer, 2000). For instance, a reference might be made to an event with the classroom tutor that had happened previously.

These notes were used for the creation of semi-structured interviews. Beyond creating opportunities to discuss the events, this also provided an opportunity to examine participants'

knowledge of literacy and literacy meta-language. This examination provided a useful example for the main study interviews.

The stimulated-recall interviews showed me that participants often have difficulty remembering events. This had caused me to interview participants immediately after the activity sessions rather than wait a number of days. However, some stimulus was needed, such as a reference to the topic of the discussion. These verbal references were found to be sufficient to provide interview data. Waiting to interview a group would have allowed for the creation of video segments for an interview stimulus, which was also done, and which did help somewhat with recall. However, for the main study, this was deemed as logistically difficult due to the number of groups and the short period between activity sessions.

The observation process and interview process also provided an opportunity to examine the methods of transcription. Transcription was labour-intensive and had no effect on the interviews. However, the process was important for examining the analytical framework, and for the building of data categories, some of which were used in the main study.

The questionnaires, in the general form and placement for the main study, were tested to examine the clarity of the instructions, and whether they derived the data that I had expected, and in the quantity and depth expected. The questions were found to be generally valid as regards those parameters. However, some of the questions were changed for the main study as a result of the data produced. The questionnaires were all tested and as a result, more room was allowed for open-ended questions, so that respondents could provide open-ended responses.

The interviews and questionnaires were reflexive work for the participants. They had a chance to reflect on their activities. Since the participants had allowed me to discuss their writing and processes, together, we built an understanding of their literacy work through their use of language, the interviews and the questionnaires.

Another aspect of this reflexive work was conducted with the classroom tutor. I interviewed the classroom tutor to ask him to examine some interesting data segments that included group discussions (using anonymised segments of transcript). The pilot study showed how interviewing the tutor can contextualise literacy group work. The work with the tutor, however, showed me how sensitive the data are to a tutor's sense of their professional acumen (Sanchez, 2010), which was unexpected. Perceived shortcomings in the participants' (i.e. the tutor's students) performance seemed to be taken by the tutor, as a fault of that tutor. What the discussion was intended to discover was students' perceptions of literacy, rather than

apportioning blame for any errors. This result caused me to re-assess my interest in including the tutor, for my study. Instead, I proceeded with a study that would largely view the literacy process from the student's or students' point of view. The tutor would only factor in the research process, indirectly, as can happen when advice or feedback are provided for students. The pilot study, therefore, led to many improvements in the methods of the main study. These changes can be found in the relevant section of this chapter.

3.6.9 Transcription

In a similar way to Edwards & Mercer (1987), the transcript does not have as its purpose the study of linguistic structure, per se (see Table 8). Therefore, the transcript segments that appear have as their goal the ease of comprehension of the discourse. This meant that the transcript would not include many diacritics or symbols. Turns would appear as whole segments of text, without unnecessary spacing.

There have been modifications made to aid in the comprehension of sentences, in some cases. Words have, on occasion, been added, in square brackets. This may be information about a referent's (e.g. a pronoun) antecedent. Additions could otherwise indicate to whom the speaker is talking. Otherwise, the grammar has not been changed. This allows for the reader to recognise the true nature of the participants' knowledge of English. There is no use of 'sic' to indicate errors.

The flow of speech is organised, as much as possible into sentences, or else, as utterances confined by punctuation. That includes using a full stop at the end. If it aided comprehension, commas were added to separate phrases. Pauses are not indicated. Instances of speakers talking over each other are not indicated as to the degree of overlap, but are simply listed as separate entries. Such inclusions were thought of as being distracting. Furthermore, they offer no meaningful information to the analysis. Interruptions in the flow of speech, or re-phrasings have been indicated by a slash mark (see Table 8).

Non-verbal pragmatic aspects of discussions are added to the transcript. Where this is relevant, this may indicate an action, such as the reading of a document or a computer. This may also indicate laughter. These appear in square brackets.

There were some points of phatic language that have been excised because of their potential for causing confusion. These were regular occurrences of words or phrases that carried no intrinsic meaning. Examples of this were phrases like “I mean” and “like”.

The groups had opportunities to reflect on the language they were using, both in their drafts, in their plans, and the language of their discussions. This occurred in instances when the group was reading aloud, typing a sentence, or negotiating the construction of a sentence. When the participants are discussing language, as in utterances for their essay, this is indicated through the use of quotation marks.

In the interest of the protection of privacy, certain names were changed. The students and staff mentioned were all represented by pseudonyms. The other courses that these participants also attend, when mentioned, also had their names changed. Lastly, the participants’ own research involved real companies, the data from which the groups discussed. Therefore, the names of the companies, their employees and the associated place names were changed. The researcher is listed as “R” (in the “Name” category) when speaking, and as “Researcher”, when mentioned in the transcript by someone else.

Transcript codes	
/	rephrasing
(...)	undeciphered words
...	unfinished utterance
[]	additional information
“ ”	speech exemplification
uh-hm	affirmative (non-verbal)
hm?	interrogative (non-verbal)
[BLANK]	left blank to protect identity

Table 8 Key for transcription codes

Micro analysis terms	Explanation
(ExT)	exploratory-type utterance or exchange
(m-ExT)	micro-exploratory utterance or exchange
(disp)	disputational-type utterance or exchange
(cumu)	cumulative-type utterance or exchange
re-phr	re-phrase
Q	a question (e.g. 2Q means two questions)
Q.ver	asking for verification
Q.req	a request
ANSW	an answer
chllng	an opposing opinion; challenge
offer	offering of a suggestion/contribution (e.g. an opinion)
expln	an explanation (reasoning)
expnd	an expansion of a previous utterance
meta-l	meta-language
con.agr	considered agreement; agreement from engaged interlocutor
agree	agreement (seemingly superficial)
seq	sequence. sentence-level, rapid, micro-exploratory exchange/extract
(no) resp	(no) response to the previous utterance
repeat	repetition of a previous utterance

Table 9 Micro analysis terms

These (Table 9) are the micro-analysis terms which will be seen in the extract analysis.

3.6.10 Validity

The credibility of a study depends on the trustworthiness of the procedures and findings (Cohen et al., 2011), which includes validity, reliability and transferability. The validity of a research project is evidence that research is not careless. Validity is conceptualised as being a fair representation of reality resulting from the methodology of a study. In other words, the research study should seek to reflect the construction of reality of the participants, and the intention of the research question. The researcher can explain the validity of his research study by explaining the measures taken to minimise the possibility of invalidity through steps taken at each stage in a research process (Cohen et al., 2011).

Internal validity, since it is a matter of degree, is dependent on the researcher's understanding of the environment that is being studied. Though my study was a cross-sectional study, it was one in which I had a depth of contact with the groups that was fairly high, relative to the total task time that the group had.

Further to that, the researcher had personal knowledge of the broader environment of the program (as a literacy tutor) in which the participants were partaking, which had included personal tutoring on all aspects of writing. However, the researcher had not previously been privy to watching the private disciplinary writing work of such groups, or individual students, and was only somewhat familiar with the genre demands of Business Studies.

The methods of observation can enhance validity. The presence at group activities and the recording of all those events on video (and audio) meant that the researcher's interpretations could be re-visited, and then reflected upon with the participants. Their nature as recordings means that the data can be reviewed to seek deeper meaning. The triangulation with ethnographic methods provided multiple instances of the some phenomena (Yin, 2009).

The design validity of a study is commensurate with the degree to which the research methods reflect the aims of the research question (Cohen et al., 2011). The research question should be linked with an appropriate methodology, research design and methods, including the sampling. My research question expressed the need to investigate group activity to understand the effect it had on literacy. Therefore, the research study observed the naturalistic work of a group writing a single essay together.

An understanding of literacy work required observation and contextualisation. The perspective regarding literacy that was indicated by the research question can be seen in the

role played by tutor feedback, as data. It is the tutor who was the local genre agent for the genre literacy for each classroom (Gimenez, 2012), and that role was visible in the mentioning of the tutor during discussions, and in the assessment task which the tutor had set. The tutor's feedback comments to the participants showed the tutor's expectations of students and their writing (Abasi & Graves, 2008). However, this literacy standard needed to be interpreted by participants, since the research question implied that the students' perspectives on literacy-in-use were most important. In fact, session 4, was important for revealing the student's interpretation, as a reflexive exercise.

The essay they wrote was the students' process, constructed together, using the tools that they wanted to. The participants used their own literacy language to share interpretations of tutor input. This was indicative of a learner's level of literacy, and their explicit knowledge of literacy and meta-language. It was incumbent on me to reduce reactivity by making the students more comfortable with my presence and by not using ethnographic methods that would distract them unduly.

External validity is important for future users of the research data. They can be aided through thick description (Cohen et al., 2011: 137). In order for the validity of data to be maximised, triangulation of data sources is best employed. Each group's observation data, interview data, questionnaires, and other paper data files were cross-referenced in order to strengthen analyses. This presented the students' perceptions of literacy to add to the study of their actions (Bell, 1990, Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This will allow also for the validation of data categories.

This is pertinent, particularly with the interview data, because in a constructivist paradigm, ideas are "jointly shaped" by the respondents and the researcher (Dornyei, 2007: 57). The researcher needs to take steps to improve the trustworthiness of the resulting joint analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Since the tutor's assessment of participants' literacy depends on a local version of a genre (Business Studies) in which the researcher is not versed, the input of the students/participants was sought to contextualise the perceived instances of literacy work. This was covered in the reflexive session (session 4), with groups, involving an analysis of the tutor's feedback on the task they had written during the activity sessions. This showed how the students understood the feedback, which in this instance, represented the literacy standard.

In coding and analysis of the data, it is also important to avoid poor coding. This can occur if coding creates an unbalanced picture of the data. This can be extended to the analysis. There is a weakening in validity if there are broader generalisations of findings than are allowed by

the data. The presentation of data should also avoid the pitfall of selectivity, and should reflect the events as thoroughly as possible. This could also occur at the reporting stage where the researchers should not be selective in presenting data and should not be unrepresentative of the data by focusing on positive aspects that aid in proving a theory.

My study has avoided such pitfalls in the analysis stage. In the quest for instances of group literacy work, I located and analysed 108 extracts. These extracts were the only perceived instances where the participants instigated a literacy discussion with a perceivable goal. These extracts were all coded and analysed in the same manner. In this exploratory study, extracts were chosen as examples of particular kinds of content or process, though all extracts had both content and process evident within.

Due to the brief nature of the research period, there is the potential for errors in perception. Despite my familiarity with the literacy processes, there may be aspects of their work that I was not able to capture due to my brief work with the participants.

Being as this was my research project, I played a number of roles. As the observer of the activity, I was in the research space. That could have provided a closeness to the activity, but also an excessive degree of confidence in my own level of awareness of events, since observation requires interpretation (Kaplan, 1999). Though the questionnaires had been prepared before the study, the interviews were based on the field notes taken during the observation. In this way, my own perception biases could have been magnified by the interview process. It is for these reasons that ethnographic methods were used to contextualise and verify findings.

In the analysis stage, as the data from the observations were coded by me, I transferred what I understood of the events that I had seen and recorded. However, this could have magnified any data lost to a potential inability to comprehend some part of the events. That is also important in light of the fact that I had no long-term exposure to their study program. Nevertheless, confirmability was balanced through the detailed analysis of extracts (Creswell, 2007).

3.6.11 Reliability

Reliable data can be judged by the degree to which the research represents a relatively realistic nature of the participants' actual work, life and habits. The nature of my research design means

that the participants were doing the work they would otherwise have been doing, at their place of study. The likelihood of natural communication was great since the group had a sense of purpose inherent in their writing task. The groups had an extrinsic goal (the essay task) that was driving their group work. This sense of purpose is important to sense-making, especially in a cross-sectional study where the researcher has some awareness of the activity, but no familiarity with the participants.

Reliability can be enhanced by certain actions that my study included. The participants' own words were presented as exemplars, in context. This can also be improved by having a database for each group (Yin, 2009), such that one group's actions did not reflect on another's. The third way to improve reliability is by doing reflexive work with the groups, through interviews and questionnaires, at certain points during, and after, the task-writing period, to verify researcher interpretations.

3.6.12 Reactivity

Reactivity is an indication that the researcher affects any research that he or she is a part of. It cannot be avoided but its effects can be minimised (Hammersley, 2008: 16). The complete absence of the researcher is not a guarantee of valid data. People cannot be assumed to be able to comment on their own behaviour (Hammersley, 2008: 182).

I dealt with this issue of intrusion by being truthful with the groups about my research interests, and my professional background. I explained to all participant groups what my role would be in the research. I was clear that I was also not involved with their program and that my data would be for my research only. Nevertheless, I might have been viewed with fear, or as an intrusion. Therefore, the behaviour of the participants should be treated as any other data, with a critical eye.

It is also possible to minimise reactivity to the researcher by not being too intrusive. It was my goal to make my data generation (questionnaires) during the writing as brief as possible, in the expectation that the students literacy work would not be adversely affected.

3.6.13 Researcher reflexivity

In SCT/AT research, it is asserted that the researcher cannot truly be completely objective. It is also believed that the researcher cannot truly remove himself/herself from the situation being observed. It is for that reason that the reflexive researcher is thought to interact somewhat with the unfolding events regardless of any intentions to be innocuous. This is why the researcher should always be considered a participant (Hammersley, 2008), but not an active one. This role as non-active participant observer allowed for the gathering of information in real time about events that occurred and about participants' perspectives (Hammersley, 2008: 102).

In being transparent about the researcher's role, it is important to clarify how much the situation to be studied is familiar, as a context. I presented myself (Hammersley, 2008: 109) as a literacy tutor who worked at that same university, and had previously worked on the same program which the participants were partaking in, as recently as 2012. This was intended to satisfy potential curiosity on the part of participants as to my motives.

That meant that a researcher can be both an insider and an outsider (Hammersley, 2008: 89). I was an insider because I had worked with students in the same program, in previous years. However, I did not know much about these participants, their specific cohort, or their literacy work in the disciplinary Business Studies option course.

I therefore did not feel out of place, and it seemed that I was not viewed as a complete outsider either. At the participants' insistence, the researcher was able to talk informally and spontaneously during activities (Hammersley, 2008: 177). This occurred on four occasions when I was asked a question about grammar. In this way, this presence may have had some effect on the events resulting from those questions. However, it could also indicate that the participants perceived me as a neutral person, in their work environment. The aim of the reflexive practitioner is for the group and the researcher to develop a more relaxed research environment due to awareness of the status of the researcher (Hammersley, 2008: 109).

In one other instance, the researcher was told of an issue of language use. This occurred with Group 3. The students in this group were all Chinese native speakers. They were conducting their first session, in English, of their own choice, when I intervened to ask the group to speak more loudly, for the benefit of the recording. The response from Cheng was this mumbling was due to the language of the discussion. According to her, the participants were less sure of themselves discussing the task in English. Though they were writing an English-language essay, they were accustomed to discussing many issues in Chinese. I was careful not to involve

myself in the participants' choice of language, which was their own. Despite that, there may have been an effect on the data. For the majority of their session time, Group 3 used English. The Chinese dialogue that occurred was translated into English, and marked as such. The translation was completed by Cheng, after the writing period had ended, and was later verified by a colleague.

3.7 Data analysis

3.7.1 Observation data

The data analysis structure is reflective of the methodology and the analysis is focused on situational data arising from activity. The research question is interpreted in my study methods to mean that I was to examine the use of language on an issue-by-issue, extract-by-extract basis, and contextualise it.

The discussion extracts are mined for the meaning they show, in situ, in that group. The data reflect the fact that participants were working together and constructing group meaning to solve real problems, using linguistic and other tools to do so, through negotiation. The study of this language shows the participants' voice and agency, as they construct their sense of literacy, in real time.

Since the data in this study was treated as situational, the creation of categories was not sought to create generalizable themes across groups. The interpretation of categories depended very much on the local context (Mercer, 1995). Therefore, any group comparison, using data, was only be allowed for superficial statistical counts, and without apportioning an equivalence of meaning to them.

This process was a two-fold, iterative analysis of the transcribed data. The two parts are 1) the types of ET (Mercer, 1995), and 2) literacy topics. As this section will show, the data categories for each were derived from both inductive and deductive processes. Both of these analyses were novelties to some degree, for tertiary disciplinary literacy research.

The inductive analysis showed that the literacy discussions, where participants were engaged to some degree with a topic, could be represented as delimited, in a form I call an extract, as has been described above. Therefore, the literacy discussions were presented in that form. Extracts were chosen based on themes, and this means that they were chosen out of

chronological sequence, and from across all groups. The cumulative nature of learning from activities did not play a significant role in this cross-sectional study due to the nature of the research question.

The discussion data were a source of information about literacy awareness. The act of negotiation revealed literacy opinions and understandings that were achieved. These negotiations may have had some effect on the acts of writing of the group's task directly, in the form of a change to a text, or may have been a theoretical discussion about literacy, or the task. However, this was primarily a study of literacy discourse.

The discourse in the group activities was taken as evidence of literacy discourse, without undue interpretation. Learning activity should be viewed as having transparent meaning (Lillis, 2008). This is ideal for the use of an inductive method of data analysis. Yates (2004) argues for this kind of broadly inductive method when seeking to translate the participants' viewpoints. In my study, these viewpoints were expressed while the subjects were taking part in an activity. Those participants were trying to construct a version of their reality, during the conduct of an activity. This would take priority over categories that come from the researcher's a priori decisions (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, Lillis, 2008), thus avoiding researcher bias in category creation, as much as possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The comprehensibility to a researcher of such data may be called into question. However, the group activities were public activities organised for a particular purpose. In much the same way as the participants meant for their words to be understood by other group members, a researcher (with experience in literacy) can also attempt to interpret their language use, with some expectation of success (exceptions below). That means to say that the discourse is considered coherent because it allowed the participants to construct meaning together, in a somewhat structured activity of their choosing, with a common goal.

3.7.2 Interview and questionnaire data

The individual questionnaires that were completed, and the interview data were necessary for contextualisation and for pointing out potential inconsistencies in the observation data. These forms of data were also designed to be reflexive in nature (Gee, 1999), rather than as sources of new activity data. While to some degree, the participants in my study were asked to interpret their actions, these interpretations (and the actions themselves) were also be interpreted by me.

This double hermeneutic is a common facet of qualitative epistemology and requires that the researcher's own interpretations be assessed reflexively by that researcher.

3.7.3 Description of the analysis

The standard of achievement is set at (common) understanding, rather than "appropriation." The link between negotiation processes (or joint constructions- Howe, 2009) and learning, or appropriation, is very controversial, except for certain experimental studies of content learning (Howe, 2009). Learning takes time to witness, requiring long-term observation (Mercer, 2008b). Even in long-term case studies, it is impossible to isolate the learning that has occurred in one situation from interfering with the learning occurring in another. Lastly, collaborative work research is less conclusive in studying "the practising of skills that have been acquired but not yet perfected," (Howe, 2009: 216). Although this is not a direct reference to literacy, it is widely held that literacy appropriation is a task that most students find difficult to master.

These groups were producing a document for assessment purposes rather than learning about literacy, per se. Appropriation did likely occur, but it is not clear whether the connection between learning and the writing of a document could be made. The common understandings achieved will indicate an improvement in understanding, as a process. The engagement with literacy has its benefits for improving group and personal understanding (Mercer, 1995). These also indicated roughly the version of literacy that would appear in their document. This often occurred in extracts because groups were often writing at the time of their discussions. This is the standard of which was set for this study.

Understanding can be seen in the use of language of the engaged participants. They discussed literacy using methods of negotiation, mediated by language. This is why the process was studied. It showed the qualitative differences in the three types of ET, and took the analysis further, explaining the qualities of these types of ET, in literacy work. It showed the productive nature of certain types of talk.

3.8 Data output

The method of describing the literacy and negotiation aspects of extracts, both at macro-level and micro-level, is presented here. The macro analysis will assess the extract holistically,

assessing the content and any result. These extracts were the construction of my perception of the participants' activity structure. The extracts represent their collaborative work, and each one shows what caused the group to "collectively characterise a situation as problematic," (Stahl et al., 2006: 418). These extracts had certain characteristics. That means that each event, drawn from the flow of discourse, had a beginning that was communicated by a participant. While the process was constructed according to participants' contributions, the results of extracts came in many forms, as defined below (4.3). As the participants did not often set such explicit boundaries to their discussions, I was required to locate them, by using criteria (Table 10). These structures were not imposed by the researcher (Engeström, 1999: 22).

Macro analysis	ET Typology (macro)	Extract descriptors
	Cumulative Disputational ExT	-bid, (no) understanding, decision, writing

Table 10 ET macro analysis

Each extract has a discernible beginning, which is called a bid (for help) (Ohta, 2000:52,68). The bid is assumed to have been expressed for the purpose of beginning a discussion. This bid may come in the form of a statement or question, and indicates the expression of a concern with an issue, or the recognition of a contradiction or tension. In effect, the bidder offers advice, seeks assistance, or otherwise seeks a discussion on an issue. For the extract to be coherent, the bid was then perceived by the other participants as containing an important issue, and so a discussion would ensue.

An extract may have an ending point, and may also have a point at which the issue culminates in new understanding. These may not be one and the same point in time. The culmination point of an extract may indicate a tentative resolution, and a new understanding. From that point onward, however, the group may decide to act on the understanding by writing something in their essay document. Meanwhile, new understandings can occur at other points, and is indicated in language use.

The macro analysis will provide a categorisation of the type of ET that the extract has shown, as one of three types: Disputational, Cumulative or Exploratory, as described above. The reason for the labelling will be indicated below (Chapter 4).

Participants expressed their awareness of literacy. Literacy work could be defined as the whole of the process of writing an assignment essay, and everything that is discussed for that purpose. Therefore, all discussion items were considered as literacy items. It was the use of an item that gave it importance in this study, rather than the item itself.

The primary inductive analysis of the literacy topics showed that there were four broad categories of literacy topic: textual work, subject content, contextual topics and activity system topics (Table 11). While the contextual topics were inductively derived, with the textual work (including three sub-topic areas) and subject content categories were iteratively derived from research data and from Tardy (2006, 2009). Most of the macro and micro labels within these categories were inductively derived. The activity system topics were iteratively derived, based on schemas from Engeström (1987).

In comparing this table with the activity system (Table 3), the textual work and subject content topics would be classified as psychological tools (though paper iterations, like books, are physical tools). The contextual topics are found in the categories of Rules, Division of Labour and Object. The activity system subject categories (of data) are found in the Subject category.

Topics	Textual Sub-topics	Macro/micro labels
Textual work topic (Tardy, 2006, 2009)	Textual Genre	(discourse) text structure, writing subject content, writing research data, cohesion, writing style
	Textual Lexico-grammatical	(sentence-level issues) grammar, lexis, sentence structure
	Textual Rhetorical	argumentation, objectivity
Subject content topic (Tardy, 2006, 2009)		Business Studies content (e.g. Flexible Firm), the participants' research & data, source material (e.g. a textbook)
Contextual topic		the issues of the classroom group assessment process (e.g. task instructions); other people (e.g. the classroom tutor)
Activity system subject topic		Subject: agency, group dynamics, self-assessment; Between, or within AT system categories: tension

Table 11 Literacy topics, macro and micro categories⁴

The textual work topics represented the various activities that refer directly to the writing act. This included items of grammar, discourse or perceptions of disciplinary literacy, under three sub-categories (Genre, Lexico-grammatical, Rhetorical). In column three are found the inductively-derived literacy topic list which represented the macro, or main label(s) negotiated over a whole extract (or an exchange), as well as for the micro labels within an extract or exchange.

The subject content category was for all the items that came from the participants' discipline, such as (representations of) lectures or books. As inputs to the writing, subject content was reflective of an academic literacies view of literacy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). The contextual topic was derived inductively for aspects that reflected the groups' wider context.

The context of the essay task involved aspects of the classroom, such as references to the tutor. The activity system topics were designed iteratively to represent the ways in which the group or its members factored in events, using the activity system categorisations of subject, as well as issues of tension that arose between or within activity system categories.

This study is designed to look holistically at educational dialogue, as extracts. However, a micro analysis of the data within an extract is important because it will reveal more about the

⁴ The topics here are not presented in a way relevant to the task process, rather than the activity system.

literacy work occurring within extracts (Saville-Troike, 1989), that led to the holistic meaning. This includes both the ET and literacy topics. These were derived from inductive data analysis.

The constituent actions within an extract are key to the development of meaning within an extract. In some extracts, the discussion is coherent all the way through, working on the same point. However, in other extracts, the path to a resolution is rather long, and involves intermediate discussions that are resolved along the way. Some of those intermediate segments cohere around a theme. Those segments, or exchanges, add meaning to the extract, and the constituent negotiation and literacy work.

In analysis, even individual moves have importance. A move is one step in such an extract that equates to an utterance, or a turn. These moves present communicative intent and/or literacy work. Therefore, these were particularly important in the definition of the typology of ET.

There is however the danger that micro categories would be reified by this, and said to have some meaning outside of the extract. That was not the intention of my study. Any analysis of subordinate items were examined in the context of the extract from which they were taken, to see what the constituent events provided to the overall extract. This aided in examining the way that groups reached an understanding, and what they were discussing. In this way, each extract was unique. Therefore, it was necessary to have a finer analysis of discourse to discover the process through which literacy issues were negotiated and ameliorated for the purpose of the writing of texts (see also Storch, 2005) (see Table 12). Some micro terms may appear in more than one macro category (i.e. the full meaning is derived from the context of the extract). In this iterative process of labelling micro categories, some data matched well with those from Mercer & Littleton (2007).

ET Type (macro)	Descriptors (micro)
Cumulative talk	superficial/ready agreement; repetition, rephrasing, expansion, short answer, tautology/repetition, superficial engagement, no explanation
Disputational talk	cutting off interlocutor; ignoring interlocutor (questions), refusal to participate, withdrawal from cooperation (verbal/non-verbal), interruption, self-repetition of a statement, abruptly ending discussion, aggressive/rhetorical questioning, answering own questions, challenge
ExT	challenge; explanation; question/answer; teaching; offer; expansion; providing an exemplar; considered agreement; acceptance; (offer to) research/read; request; rephrasing

Table 12 ET talk micro categories

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has shown the research tools that were used in my study, their construction as a complete analytical strategy, and the epistemological and ontological basis for doing so. This enabled an explanation of the process which will show the analysis of the complex combination of negotiation and literacy topics that occurs in tertiary literacy activity. The next chapter will show the results of the research study.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present a review of data from the research observation sessions and triangulation through interviews and questionnaires. The purpose is to present an organised, theme-based argument for a dynamic analysis of literacy work, which leads to the answering of the research question. Therefore, this chapter will present extracts which represent some of the research groups' literacy activities. Through these examples, it will be shown how the process of negotiation fosters growth in understanding amongst the members. It will show how the negotiation process is a complex activity which is led by students' needs, arising from the task. The literacy work will be shown to be driven by the task, and in certain ways by the need to resolve structural tensions.

The first section will present a statistical summary of the sessions, in terms of the research activities, the group work parameters. This will begin with a representation of the duration of recorded sessions, for both observation and interviews. This is followed by an explanation of the statistical information which describes the extract data.

4.2 Statistics

Table 13 shows the amount of recorded research time in each session, for each group. The first two sessions occurred during the writing period. Both of these had literacy work sessions and questionnaires (before and after the activity), and an interview (only after Session 2). Sessions 3 and 4, which occurred in the post-writing period, consisted only interviews, and in the case of session 3, a questionnaire. The third and fourth sessions were only conducted with groups 2 and 3, as group 1 was unavailable. Session 3 was centred upon discussing the task and process, shortly after the end of the writing. Session 4 was designed to discuss the feedback from the tutor.

	WRITING STAGE			POST WRITING	
Session	1	2		3	4
Group	Literacy work	Literacy work	Interview	Interview	Interview
1	73	58	6	0	0
2	44	82	8	25	38
3	52	56	11	40	30

Table 13 Recorded session time, task types, per group (in minutes, approximate)

GROUP	STAGE	EXPLORATORY	DISPUTATIONAL	CUMULATIVE
1	PLANNING	8	2	0
	WRITING	10	0	0
	EDITING	15	2	3
	TOTAL n=40	33	4	3
2	PLANNING	10	0	7
	WRITING	0	0	0
	EDITING	23	1	1
	TOTAL n=42	33	1	8
3	PLANNING	10	0	2
	WRITING	0	0	0
	EDITING	14	0	0
	TOTAL n=26	24	0	2
N=108				

Table 14 Types of ET extracts (3 stages)

GROUP	SESSION	LITERACY CATEGORY		
		Textual topics	Content topics	Context topics
1	1	11	14	12
	2	17	12	4
	TOTAL n=70	28	26	16
2	1	13	10	16
	2	25	6	3
	TOTAL n=73	38	16	19
3	1	11	7	8
	2	15	3	5
	TOTAL n=49	26	10	13
N=192				

Table 15 Number of literacy topics, per group, session

Table 14 Shows the number of distinct literacy extracts (N=108) taken from each group's transcripts of sessions one and two. Of this total, approximately⁵ 83.3% of them were ExT,

⁵ To one decimal point

with 12% being Cumulative and 4.6% being Disputational. The three groups' data showed that 82.5% , 78.5% and 92.2% of their extracts were classed as ExT, respectively.

Since ExT exchanges are seen as the most productive type of ET, most of the extracts found amongst each group's literacy sessions were of a relatively productive nature. These data seem to indicate that the groups did indeed engage with important issues that needed to be resolved.

These extracts represent self-contained discussions on a topic or topics. The data are also divided into the three different stages of the writing process: planning, writing, editing (Storch, 2005). The group totals show how Group 1 (n=40) and Group 2 (n=42) had a similar number of extracts, and they were much higher than those of Group 3 (n=26). That does not indicate that one group had better productivity or better writing than another, because productivity cannot be judged solely in this manner.

The only group that participated in writing, as a group, in these sessions was Group 1, during session 1. The groups were required to work together, but that requirement could have been interpreted in many ways. The other groups (2 and 3) explicitly chose not to write together, as the observation data showed. That indicated their belief that they preferred to write alone, as has been found in previous tertiary research (Storch, 2005). This parallel writing (Yang, 2014), the division of task for individual writing, is sometimes that is seen as quicker. However, this type of combining of individual components is known technically as cooperative writing (Stahl et al., 2006).

The data in Table 14 are divided up into the different types of ET. The ExT type of talk clearly dominates, being significantly more common than Disputational or Cumulative extracts. This indicates generally productive cooperation. This is also reflected in questionnaire data, where eight of nine participants indicated a positive attitude towards group writing.

Table 15 shows how many individual (macro) topics (N=192) were negotiated within the complete set of extracts (N=108) during each of the literacy group sessions, for each group. This gives a numerical indication of the production resulting from discussion. Some extracts contained the discussion of more than one topic concurrently, at times from more than one of the three categories. For every group, the textual work extracts were the most numerous, in overall production. Groups one (n=70) and group 2 (n=73) discussed many more topics than group 3 (n=49). This does not mean that any one group had a better essay, or better productivity, or better discussions.

The next section will present extracts to explain the components of the analysis, explaining the symbols in the process. It will give a rationale for how extracts were chosen, and the structural parts of an extract.

4.3 Explaining Data Generation

The groups individually, through their essay task, were engaging in discussions. This was purposeful activity that allowed the participants to construct common understandings, in a dialectic with the task. Viewed holistically, the negotiating of meaning held within it instances of individuals' perceptions of literacy. The delineation of extracts from the raw transcript data was derived inductively from the participants' structure of discussions. This was done so that literacy discussions could be examined as processes. The analysis of ET, as it relates to tertiary literacy work, rests upon the realisation and examination of such processes. This includes examining the structure of extracts to show how a process of literacy work progressed. The expression of the extract is based on Mercer (1995), but fulfils the requirements of my methodology, and is thus unique in many respects. Therefore, in order to employ a new system of labelling, it is necessary to define and exemplify an extract and the smaller units within an extract, as will appear in the next section.

4.3.1 The key elements of an extract

This extract (extract 1- Table 16) is an extract which will be used to explain the constituent parts of an extract, rather than giving a full analysis. This extract shows both the transcript data and the analytical categories that are used to describe the literacy topics and the negotiation process. The column headers (top left) display the Group, and the stage in their process which the extract was taken from. The columns, from left to right are: 1) the name of the speaker; 2) the number of the turn; 3) the words spoken; 4) the micro analysis; 5) the literacy topics (top), and sub-topics (below); 6) the macro analysis of the extract (including ET type). Along the bottom row, there is a reference to the transcript label (column 1), and; the recording media time reference (column 3). This next segment will describe many of the constituent parts of the extract.

Name	Turn	Group: 3 Stage: planning Exploratory (exchanges 1,2)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Text: (1) structure & (2) aim & process
Fan	6-1	Introduction		Text: meta-l
Zhan	6-2	what should we cover?	(ExT 1a) Q [bid]	
Fan	6-3	first, we need the background	(ExT 1b) ANSW	Text: meta-l
Cheng	6-4	business background	(ExT 1c) expnd	Text: meta-l Content: research
Fan	6-5	and so the background needs to cover the background of the firm as well as process we / how we did for the ...	(ExT 1d) re-phr & expnd [understanding]	Content: research
Zhan	6-6	how we get information of that company	(ExT 1e) expnd	Content: research
Fan	6-7	the firm and the process	(ExT 1f) expnd	Content: research
Cheng	6-8	I think we put the business background first and then we say “this essay”/ we say...	(ExT 1g) offer	Text: structure
Fan	6-9	something about our essay	(ExT 1h) expnd	
Cheng	6-10	“we conducted an interview with the manager of this business/ this restaurant on University X campus and this essay will cover three...” / Well “we asked a few question in three aspect and this essay will cover this and also these questions. That’s the aim of this essay.”	(ExT 1i) offer	Text: writing & meta-l Content: research data
Zhan	6-11	Yes	agree	
Cheng	6-12	What about thesis statement?	Out of context	Text: meta-l (thesis)
Zhan	6-13	so, like write the aim then write the process of interview	(ExT 2a) offer [bid]	Text: meta-l (aim & process)
Cheng	6-14	no, I think process of interview first and then aim	(ExT 2b) chllng	Text: meta-l (aim & process)
Zhan	6-15	But, I think aim is first. We need have the aim, then to ...	(ExT 2c) chllng	Text: meta-l (aim)
Cheng	6-16	I mean the aim of this essay is the aim of the (...)	(ExT 2d) chllng	Text: meta-l (aim)
Zhan	6-17	oh, okay	(ExT 2e) con.agr [understanding]	
T3/1/6	1	[dvd 1a 25:35- 27:18]		

Table 16: An example extract

As with each extract examined, this ExT extract was chosen because there are indications that the participants were trying to solve an issue as part of their writing task process. As the group were at the planning stage, this was a decision which would affect the writing of their introduction, at some future time. Viewed holistically, the extract reveals the topic of the discussion which was the structure of the introduction section of the participants’ essay.

The discussion within the extract shows ExT, of different kinds. There is, for example, a question, an offer, several expansions, several challenges, and instances of agreement. The culmination of the extract is a new understanding about the organisation of the “aim” part,

within the introduction section (6-17, i.e. line 17), while there is one other instance of understanding (6-5).

Within that holistic view, there is value in examining the constituent exchanges to reveal the structure of the dialogue. The extract was divided into two separate, related exploratory exchanges (exchanges one and two) because that is how the discussion transpired. The first exchange (6-1 to 6-11) presents a discussion of the structure of the introduction section. This begins with a bid (6-2), in the form of a question. A clear example of understanding is seen in 6-5, where Fan rephrases the previous statement, and then expands on it. This shows that he has understood and accepted that previous statement.

This exchange ended on Zhan's agreement (6-11). He agreed with what Cheng had said just previously. However, since he was agreeing, and yet not engaging in depth with what was said, it is uncertain whether he had gained an understanding.

Near the end of this exchange, there is mention of the "aim" (an example of meta-language) (6-10). Discussion of this aim is also carried on in exchange two (6-13 to 6-17), but in a separate discussion which was about the placement of the aim. Zhan begins with a statement that functions as a bid. Two constituent parts of the participants' essay introduction are mentioned (aim and what they call "the process of the interview")(6-13). That discussion between Cheng and Zhan ends in an understanding about the aim (6-17). This time Zhan shows that he has a new understanding, after having engaged Cheng in discussion.

It can then be seen that the two exchanges had separate issues, but two which were related to each other, as parts of the structure of the introduction. There was a cycle of discussion in each exchange and a change of topic, from one exchange to the other. Though only one exchange came to an orderly conclusion with an understanding, the other exchange also showed some engagement and understanding.

An extract discussion needs to have a beginning point, known as a bid, which may not be the first line of the extract. This bid indicates the desire on the part of one participant to discuss an issue expressed to one or more group members. The bid for help can take the form of a question or a statement, and it indicates that this speaker is seeking help with an issue.

The discussions showed how the groups were seeking a resolution to their issues. A resolution is not necessarily a conclusion to a discussion. It may be found in any sign of understanding, by one or more of the members, that reflects a deep engagement with that issue. A resolution

may also be followed by a decision regarding the writing of the essay, which may be realised soon afterwards.

These exchanges can also show ExT moves. Zhan had been engaging Cheng in a discussion about the aim (6-13 to 6-17). There were moves by Zhan and Cheng, where they challenged each other's conceptions of the aim. These moves caused the exchange to progress to a solution, a new understanding for Zhan (6-17), and a common understanding, as he agreed with Cheng.

Zhan's agreement (6-17) was interpreted as being well-considered, and not casual (i.e. "considered agreement"). This seeming agreement is also taken to mean that Zhan has likely understood Cheng's point, and has therefore advanced his own understanding of the issue. Agreeing (e.g. "yes") with someone is not sufficient to indicate understanding.

This shows the importance of the smaller analytical units called moves and exchanges. A move can be represented in one utterance. An important move is an utterance that expresses meaning that adds to the meaning of an extract. This is not necessarily the equivalent of a turn in an exchange, because a *turn* may have more than one move.

An exchange can be represented by a coherent dialogue between participants. A move, or exchange, can be categorised as ExT, Disputational or Cumulative. They don't, by themselves, have full meaning, until they are considered as part of a whole extract. However, they can offer insight into the way that literacy discussions are structured. They can also reveal the way that literacy is expressed.

The literacy content listed shows issues of textual work and of subject content. The group indicated their knowledge of textual meta-language, by discussing aspects of the structure of their essay (e.g. introduction, thesis statement). The group's research data figured prominently in the discussion. In turn 6-10, the content and writing are both discussed as Cheng offers potential sentences for their essay, to describe their data.

The next section will feature macro analyses of entire extracts, examining the typology of ET, in a tertiary-level literacy discussion and explain the characteristics. That means that exchanges will be looked at firstly, on a holistic (macro) level, and then on a more micro level. This micro analysis will examine the role of constituent moves and exchanges, and their role in the way the discussion progresses, and the expression of literacy content of the discussion. This will then show how and why these factors combined to produced the particular extract.

The typology arises from overarching categorisation of the process (e.g. the degree to which a problem was solved) as well as from the dominant type of negotiation in that extract.

The reason for beginning with the examination of Disputational and Cumulative talk is so as to begin our understanding of some of their possible characteristics of these types of ET in a tertiary literacy environment. This could be important for tertiary tutors examining any literacy process.

4.4 Typology of Educational Talk

This segment will explain the two less frequent, qualitatively different types of ET. The Disputational and Cumulative types of ET are categorised in this way because of a holistic analysis of the extracts and the constituent moves and exchanges. This micro level analysis is necessary to explain some of the reasons for this categorisation that may be particular to tertiary ET, or alternatively similar to that found by Mercer's inductive analysis of primary and secondary ET (e.g. Maybin, Edwards & Mercer, 1988).

An activity is said to begin with a point of tension that is expressed as a problem by a group. It is then said to progress through negotiation and often to a new understanding. This section will show that at this basic level, the three types of ET develop differently, as processes.

4.4.1 Disputational talk

I judged this extract (extract 2- Table 17) to be an example of Disputational talk. As an issue of group dynamics, this extract (and extract 3) are classed as an activity system subject topic. As a discourse, the original purpose of the discussion, as stated by members, was thwarted, and the group stopped cooperating. During the process, participants' questions were not answered (Rojas-Drummond et al., 2006), and there were few attempts at building understanding through ExT. Individual moves by some participants were mostly either defensive or offensive, rather than cooperative.

The extract 2 shows group 1 working during their planning stage. The segment begins with the intention of addressing an issue. There is a bid which shows Yan's desire to start writing. The group was concerned with the sequence of activities in the forthcoming process of writing their essay. Therefore, this segment is about textual issue of strategy, or the writing process.

The task had a role in this extract, particularly since the group was referred to the task instructions many times.

The structural tension in this discussion arose from the variety of choices for this process of writing. There were different positions amongst members about how to proceed. This may be indicative of the members' previous experiences of writing an essay and their desire (agency) to convince others of their perspective.

The extract structure is best described as having 14 different exchanges. That includes 5 short ExT exchanges, and 9 separate Disputational moves, interspersed among them. Each lone Disputational move is an indication of a lack of engagement with others, a lack of agreement and the lack of sustained cooperative talking. In this way, the discussion is very disjointed. Many times, the participants do not respond to the interlocutor, but respond with a monologue that is itself often not engaged with. These characteristics are indicative of a Disputational extract. A micro analysis will present the characteristics of this extract.

Name	Turn	Group: 1 Stage: planning Disputational extract Disp exch 1 to 9 ExT exch 1 to 5	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Text: writing process, structure Context: task
Yan	6-1	Can we write it? Can we just start writing it? And if we feel like, okay, we missed some information, then we write the question? Instead of write the question first. That will be too much, you know? Otherwise, we feel like we got too much information, we don't know what to write. We just focus here [computer] first. And if we really miss something...	(ExT 1a) offer & 3Q [Bid] (ExT 1b) expln (repeating)	Text: writing process
Su	6-2	then. now we will write the main body	(ExT 1c) con.agr	Text: meta-l
Yan	6-3	okay. Yes	(ExT 1d) con.agr [Understanding]	
Su	6-4	Not the literature review. main body	clarify	
Yan	6-5	(...) thinking about question again.		Context: task
Su	6-6	okay. let's start with your legislations. Which is the first question? Or, if you like, we can start with marketing.	(ExT 2a) offer & Q & offer	Content: legislation Context: task
Hin	6-7	No, no. what do you want to do? You want to write the essay now?	(ExT 3a) chlIng 2Q	Text: writing process
Su	6-8	[laughs]	(disp 1a) no resp	
Hin	6-9	Right?	(disp 2a) repeat	
Yan	6-10	Yes	(unclear)	
Hin	6-11	You can't. What if we try to write the essay? you don't have any structure. What will you try to write?	(ExT 3a) chlIng & expln	Text: writing process, structure
Yan	6-12	(...) structure. What I say is get on the essay now instead of thinking about the question	(disp 3a) chlIng, no resp	Text: structure Context: task
Hin	6-13	This [points at task sheet] is essay. this is essay	(ExT 4a) chlIng (disp 4a) repeat	Context: task
Yan	6-14	I thought this is a question	(disp5a) chlIng. no resp	Context: task
Su	6-15	This is question	(disp6a) chlIng. no resp	Context: task
Hin	6-16	a question. but it won't provide information for the essay, right?	(ExT 5a) expln & Q	Context: task
Yan	6-17	What I mean is we write things first and if we feel like we missed some information we really need to ask, then we write [an answer to] the [task] question	(disp 7a) chlIng & repeat & no expln & no resp	Text: writing & process Context: task
Hin	6-18	So, this is what I want to ask you. Try to write the essay or the structure of essay and then the outline?	(disp 8a) chlIng & no resp	Text: meta-l & process
Yan	6-19	What I just said is we write something for interpreting the question. That's all	(ExT 5a) offer	Text: meta-l Context: task
Hin	6-20	I think this [what was said 6-19] is right.	(ExT 5b) con.agr [misunderstanding]	
Yan	6-21	Okay, let's write anything. Doesn't matter.	(disp 9a) stopped negotiating [no decision]	
T1/1/6	2	[cam 1b 14:22 -15:58]		

Table 17 Disputational talk extract

This extract begins with a bid from Yan (6-1) about how to proceed with the group's writing process. Yan and Su reached an agreement (6-2), but it was short-lived. Hin (6-3) presented a different perspective, and the group, as a whole, does not reach an agreement on process. When agreement does occur, it is between two of the three members, and that is apparently not sufficient.

The first exchange, between Yan and Su, is on the issue of planning the writing of the essay. Yan made a bid (6-1) wherein she offered that the group start writing the essay, at that moment, without using a particular preparatory strategy.

Yan: Can we write it / can we just start writing it? and if we feel like, okay, we missed some information, then we write the question? Instead of write the question first... Otherwise, we feel like we got too much information, we don't know what to write. (T1/1/6-1)

Early in the discussion, there seemed to be a consensus arising. Yan's preference was to not look at the task question, and she explained her reasons for this preference (6-1). Yan explained that having too much information to sort would hamper writing. These moves (offer and explanation) were exploratory in nature because of their contribution to the beginning of the discussion. Su appeared to be in agreement with Yan (6-2). She advanced the discussion by offering that the group begin by writing the "main body" of the essay (6-6), giving a choice of two sub-sections (Yan's legislation section, or the Marketing section). This short exchange was exploratory in nature and there was agreement between Yan and Su.

However, the discussion continued with a challenge from Hin (6-7). This was directed at the choice of Su and Yan to begin writing immediately. From that point onward, the exchange became Disputational, in large part. This is so because of the nature of the various moves and exchanges, and their implications for the group and its work.

Hin's challenge to the others took the form of some pointed questions about the process (6-7, 6-9). Her questions were an effort to express her opinion about starting the writing process with an outline which would have been a plan for the essay.

The discussion continued with more Disputational behaviour, in the form of laughter. There was no effort to answer Hin's question (6-8), as the short responses that occurred did not address Hin's question (6-10). These responses were Disputational because of the lack of desire to co-operate.

At this point, Hin (6-11) repeated her opinion that writing could not proceed. However, in an exploratory move, Hin's explained her reasoning by claiming the process of writing needed a structure before writing could begin (6-11). Hin then asked questions of her fellow members. These were not answered:

Hin: You can't [write the essay]. What if we try to write the essay? you don't have any structure. What will you try to write? (T1/1/6-11)

The Disputational nature of the exchanges continued, focusing on the task question. Yan defended her position by repeating her desire to write without "thinking about the question" (6-12). When Hin responded by pointing to the task questions, claiming that the question (metaphorically) was necessary (6-13). In return, both her partners critically assessed Hin's interpretation of the task question (6-14, 6-15). This did not seem to further the discussion. Hin continued to defend her belief about the importance of the task question through two further questions (6-17, 6-18) that were not answered.

There seemed to be a solution when Yan (6-19) claimed that she was in favour of interpreting the task question. This move was also an exploratory move in that it engendered a positive response to Hin (6-20). This shows both a positive move as regards the discussion and an understanding of the meta-language of literacy, and the specific issue of the need for interpretation of the question.

However, there may have been a misunderstanding, as will be shown below. There is an indication of a break in communication in Yan's next statement, with which she tries to end the discussion without agreement (6-21).

This micro analysis of the extract was designed to explain the reasons why it appeared to be Disputational. There were many examples of Disputational moves where the discussion broke down. There were within that some exploratory moves, but they also did not move the discussion towards a solution. The next extract will present an important implication of the previous extract (extract 2).

The next extract (extract 3- Table 18) was a non-contiguous extension of the discussion above (extract 2). It was chosen in order to show the effect of the misunderstanding above, and to examine the Disputational talk therein. This extract occurred after a gap of a number of minutes (after extract 2), the partners came to discussing once again the same issue, about how to proceed with the writing process. It appears that there was a misunderstanding between Hin and Yan in extract 2.

In extract 2, the members were challenging each other. However, this time, they did answer each other. In two cases, members explained their positions. However, their positions remained, despite this effort at constructing common understanding or in moving the process forward. The various moves were exploratory in nature, but not sufficiently helpful to overcome the disagreement. Neither writing plan (from extract 2) had received universal approval, and their process plan was not agreed upon. Therefore, despite the challenges and explaining, this was still Disputational talk.

Name	Turn	Group: 1 Stage: planning Disputational (No agreement/ progress)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Text: process, writing
Yan	8-1	but, we can mention this one first. We skip this one. Okay? because we don't have the information about it. But we can talk about this first. Yes, they do have flexibility for their working hours. we can mention this first.	(ExT 1a) offer & expln	Content: Human resources
Hin	8-2	no. We don't need to write the essay now. we have to have the structure first.	(ExT 1b) chllng & expln [bid]	Text: meta-l
Su	8-3	Hin, I think we know the structure.	(ExT 1c) chllng	Text: meta-l
Hin	8-4	we don't / you see. because we don't have the structure from the beginning, so, we miss a lot of information.	(ExT 1d) chllng & expln	Text: meta-l
Su	8-5	but now we have notes. We know what we missed.	(ExT 1e) chllng & expln	
Hin	8-6	no. this one. Because you can have note from the other, right? but they also can miss the thing too.	(ExT 1e) chllng & expln	
Yan	8-7	[to Su] okay. The first one. We have to/ do agree with it? We go ask about the information here	(out of context)	
Su	8-8	[to Yan] Ya	(out of context)	
Yan	8-9	[to Su] and then we talk about this first. This flexibility firm is the structure. Why cannot...	(out of context)	
Su	8-10	[to Yan] where is the flexibility, by the way, which chapter?	(out of context)	
T1/1/8	3	[dvd 1a 31:10 – 32:10]		

Table 18 Disputational-talk extract (continued)

The process visible in extract 3 shows how Hin (8-2) expresses her opinion about the need for a structure for their essay before beginning writing. Her belief about the lack of a structure was contradicted (8-3), but not explained. Hin then responded by explaining her reasoning for wishing there to be a structure. Su (8-5) speaks of the adequacy of their notes, but that is also

not accepted (8-6). The discussion shifts to another subject, thereby ending extract 3. The two positions were stated clearly, and yet there was no resolution.

This extract showed the structure and nature of Disputational talk. This was done through a micro analysis of the extract. This was important for my study because it shows the Disputational talk, as a concept, could be applied to university tertiary study. The next section will show an example of cumulative talk.

4.4.2 Cumulative talk

Extract 4 (Table 19) is showing an example of a Cumulative-talk extract. The exchanges seem to show few attempts at creating new understanding because the discourse amongst participants was not inquisitive about the reasons for any statement that had been made. This may mean that the participants were experienced in this issue (or in discussing it).

This extract shows group 2 planning their writing process. The literacy topic, a textual issue, was the Conclusion section to their paper. The purpose of the discussion was about whether the conclusion should refer to, and summarise, each of the task questions. There is no indication of any tension in this discussion. This lack of tension may be associated with the Cumulative nature of the discussion.

The structure of this exchange, as regards the negotiation patterns, may be reflective of Cumulative discussion. It may also be that the planning stage, being about future work, may not always require deep discussion. There are some exploratory moves, but they are interspersed amongst Cumulative utterances.

Cumulative utterances do not present an explanation or reasoning, or a challenge, meaning that there is little opportunity for growth in understanding. Most Cumulative additions take the form of expansions on a previous utterance. There is little questioning and no challenging. This is likely due to the nature of the planning stage.

This segment began with a bid, from Vana (13-1), indicating an interest in discussing the Conclusion. The moves in the discussion were all related to that section of the text, in one long exchange. However, there were many issues, that were related to this section of text, that were also discussed. For that reason there appeared to be a large number of instances of

understanding evident from the work. This is indicative of a discussion that was not deep, but instead one which was checking existing knowledge.

Name	Turn	Group: 2 Stage: planning Cumulative (Cumulative exchange 1) (Exploratory exchs 1,2)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Text: Conclusion section
Vana	13-1	What do you think should be in the conclusion? Like the conclusion for each part [each question]? Or?	(ExT 1a) Q & Q [bid]	Text: meta-l Context: task
Cher	13-2	for each part	(ExT1b) ANSW	
Hank	13-3	Save a little bit of each part and then...	(ExT 1c) expnd	
Vana	13-4	I was thinking ...		
Cher	13-5	answer each question in conclusion	(cumula) repeat [understanding]	Text: meta-l
Vana	13-6	ya. Right	(cumulb) agree	
Cher	13-7	so. Ya. will be 300 words, I guess	(cumulc) repeat & expnd [understanding]	Context: task
Vana	13-8	so, about 100 each	(cumuld) expnd [understanding]	
Cher	13-9	answer every question	(cumule) repeat	Context: task
Vana	13-10	(...) is 200 words		
Cher	13-11	And answer them briefly - We don't have to introduce the company in conclusion?	(ExT 1a) expand & Q	
Vana	13-12	No	(cumul f) ANSW no expln	
Cher	13-13	just basically, just the topic sentence of each section and that's it	(ExT 2a) expnd [understanding]	Text: meta-l Context: task
Hank	13-14	just say the main things	(cumul g) repeat	
Vana	13-15	okay. But basically no literature review.	(cumul h) agree & expnd [understanding]	Text: meta-l
Hank	13-16	No	(cumuli) ANSW no expln	
Vana	13-17	Just Company X. the application [of the questions]to Company X	(cumul j) expnd	Content: research Context: task
Cher	13-18	ya. 200 words, 3 sections, 1,2,3,4,5,6 questions. 30 words each	(cumul k) agree & expnd [understanding]	Context: task
Vana	13-19	Ya. I mean, I think we both should try to make it as brief as we can. (...) leaving some room for it	(cumul l) repeat 13-11 [understanding]	Text: brevity
T2/1/13	4	[cam 1a 33:00 - 34:19]		

Table 19 Cumulative-talk extract

This discussion was a series of connected, short exchanges about dividing up the writing of the conclusion. The first point was a decision about what would be taken from the essay body to include in the Conclusion. It was decided that the task questions would provide short answers which would be copied from the body and transferred to the conclusion (13-5/6). Those key

answers were later described as the “topic sentence of each section” (13-13). That was later limited to the topic sentences from the research section of the paper (13-17).

Next, the group decided how long the whole Conclusion would be and how to divide the work amongst themselves (13-8). There were other calculations of the word count, otherwise 300 or 200, and the need to give equal space to all of the questions (6. 13-18).

There may be a reason why this section appears Cumulative. It may be that this aspect of the planning stage was not necessarily a challenging task for the participants. In no part of the exchange did the discussion seem to examine any of the participants’ beliefs or knowledge.

This analysis was important because it showed that the Cumulative talk concept could be applied to the analysis of university literacy talk. This analysis was achieved through a micro analysis of the extract.

This section described two types of ET, Cumulative and Disputational talk, which were relatively rare. These types of talk have been shown to be somewhat productive, where productivity means a growth in understanding that is associated with engagement with an issue. The examples of these two types of talk appeared, from this study, to coalesce together into whole extracts.

These two types of ET were less productive than ExT, but for different reasons. Disputational talk was less productive due to the differences of opinion, the inability to explain opinions, or the lack of negotiation. The Cumulative extract showed how, at times, participants are not cognitively challenged by a task. This can also be related to their experience with such a task.

The following sections will examine some of the key themes arising from the observation. They will show the way that the group work process affected the issue being studied, and how it may have brought one or more members to a new understanding.

4.5 Rationale for the analysis

The remainder of the extracts that will be shown will be mostly ExT extracts, as they are by far the most common type of ET. They are most productive type of ET, and indicative of the serious engagement of the participants in work. This will allow for a closer examination of themes in literacy work.

The task drives activity, while certain structural tensions are revealed as work progresses. The participants engage with the task in the hope of resolving the tensions that they witness, to their satisfaction. The analysis will show the ways that group work helps in the negotiations that build greater understanding of those issues. Through this, it is possible to discover their path to understanding. These particular extracts were chosen because they show examples of the struggle to discover the meanings within literacy.

4.6 The Category of Textual Work

The topic category of textual work is designed to capture all of the work that is regarded as the task of writing itself. The creation of words, paragraphs and structures brings together content knowledge and other contextual issues.

4.6.1 Fulfilling a task instruction

The ExT extract 5 (Table 20) is categorised as a textual work item which involves answering a task question (2 questions), and issues of text organisation that arise as a result. This extract occurred during the planning stage. The members of Group 3 were discussing the Human Resources (HR) section of their essay, which was to be Fan's individual writing task. The tension in this segment arises from the different opinions about the content and organisation of that section of text.

This extract is a cohesive exchange about the writing of a section of an essay. There were a series of issues discussed, those being the relevant task questions, the content of the section, the pattern for that section and the organisation of the segments of that section. This exchange began with a bid from Zhan, who enquired about the plan for the Human Resources (HR) section of the essay (9-1). As a result, Fan (9-10) reaches a better understanding about what the issue of the legislation from the tripartite discussion.

Name	Turn	Group: 3 Stage: planning Exploratory (exchange 1)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Content: HR outline
Zhan	9-1	next part, HR. What do you want to cover in HR?	(ExT 1a) Q [bid]	Text: writing Content: HR
Cheng	9-2	obviously these two questions should be covered	(ExT 1b) ANSW	Context: task
Zhan	9-3	Yes	Agree	
Cheng	9-4	so, legislations	(ExT 1c) expnd	
Fan	9-5	this is how to (...). I'm not sure what that is	(ExT 1d) req	
Zhan	9-6	This is just talk about [read] "In this restaurant, the employee have ...	(ExT 1e) ANSW	Content: research data
Cheng	9-7	I think firstly we need to mention how many people they have and their positions - And they have only two Chinese chefs and the rest of them are from University X students and then you say legislations. They don't have any discrimination or they have equal pay for...	(ExT 1f) expnd & offer	Text: writing content Content: theory & data
Zhan	9-8	ya, equal pay	(ExT 1g) con.agr	
Cheng	9-9	and just cover what we had in the [PowerPoint] presentation. Also you could talk more about that. And also flex / well I don't think you have to follow the order. You can also say the flexible time working time first and the / return to legislation. They have equal pay. They have no discrimination	(ExT 1h) offer.advice & offer.advice	Content: Previous written work Content: theory & data
Fan	9-10	I think you have just said / What you have just said is good. the spec / maybe the introduction of the human resource and then the legislation.	(ExT 1i) con.agr [understanding] (ExT 2a) offer [bid]	Text: structure
Cheng	9-11	Well, I mean, you can switch.	(ExT 2b) chllng	Text: structure
Zhan	9-12	you can put ...		
Cheng	9-13	[to Fan] but you should also give a brief human / HR. how they actually...	(ExT 2c) chllng	Text: structure
T3/1/9	5	[dvd 1a 29:13 - 31:37/cam 1a 1:16]		

Table 20 Fulfilling task instructions

There is mention of the two relevant HR questions that are on the essay task sheet (9-2, 9-4). One of those questions needed to be explained to Fan (9-5). As a result of this question, Zhan and Cheng described their ideas about which research data would answer the question (9-6, 9-7). These were data about employees, aspects of the relevant legislation (i.e. equal pay, discrimination) (9-9).

This group had previously worked on an outline, in the form of a PowerPoint document that the group had prepared for a presentation, in front of their classroom group, as a preparatory stage to the writing of the essay. Cheng referred to this previous work as a good pattern for the essay. Cheng recommended that Fan refer to it (9-9). Fan showed his agreement and implicitly, his understanding (9-10).

The next issue that was negotiated was the order of the segments of this HR section. Fan decided about the order of the writing in the HR section (9-10). This plan is challenged by both Cheng and Zhan, who indicated that the structure of the HR section could take many forms (9-11, 9-12).

The micro analysis revealed how the group needed to organise and plan the writing of a section on that topic, through their dialectic with the task. The tension was resolved by a cooperative effort to inform Fan. That led Fan, in the second exchange, to the broaching of the issue of how to organise the section. The importance of this extract is the way in which different opinions about structure were revealed through dialogue, and how content and structure are linked.

As this is the first ExT extract, it is important to note the qualities of ExT in the individual moves, which were requests, offers, challenges, considered agreement, and a question which was answered. The next extract will look at the discussion of a thesis statement.

4.6.2 Thesis statement

The following extract 6 (Table 21) is indicative of ExT, and shows Group 3 working together, planning the writing of their text. This extract has a textual subject, the thesis statement. Through this discussion, the group were examining the function of the thesis statement in theory and in their essay. The tension in this discussion may be caused by uncertainty over the concept of the thesis statement. These differences of opinion indicate the diverse experiences of the members on the subject of the essay genre.

As is indicative of ExT, this extract is constructed of one exchange, on one issue. The issue has the full attention, and contributions of all members. This means that the discussion is coherent and cohesive, meaning that there is agreement on the need to resolve this issue. The bid was made by Cheng, and there was a joint decision at the end of the extract that had an effect on the plan for their essay.

Name	Turn	Group: 3 Stage: planning Exploratory (exchange 1)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Text: thesis statement
Cheng	7-1	What do you think of the thesis?	(ExT 1a) Q [bid]	Text: meta-l
Fan	7-2	You don't need to write the thesis	(ExT 1b) ANSW & chllng	Text: meta-l
Zhan	7-3	Do we need to write? I think it's necessary but just a general sentence.	(ExT 1c) Q &chllng & expln	Text: meta-l
Fan	7-4	but, I don't think we have such sentence	(ExT 1d) chllng	Text: essay & meta-l
Cheng	7-5	we don't have sentence	(ExT 1e) con.agr	Text: essay & meta-l
Zhan	7-6	okay. Leave it out. Then, the outline. Introduction finished.	(ExT 1f) con.agr [understanding] [decision]	Text: meta-l
T3/1/7	6	[dvd 1a 27:22 - dvd 1a 28:07]		

Table 21 Thesis statement

Cheng asked for her partners' opinion about the thesis statement in their essay (7-1). Cheng seemed to believe one was necessary, by her question. This was a theoretical question about the need for a thesis statement. Fan challenged Cheng. He offered that a thesis statement was not necessary for their essay (7-2).

This statement raised some doubt in Zhan and a question (7-3), and challenge. However, he answered the question himself, offering an opinion. Zhan expressed his belief in the necessity for a thesis statement. Then, Zhan turned the discussion over to types of thesis statements. He added that a "general" thesis statement may be necessary. This concept of a general thesis statements was taken on by Fan (7-4). He showed that he believed that the essay did not require even a general thesis statement. The last stage of this was the signalling of agreement. Cheng agreed with Fan (7-5), and Zhan exclaimed the group's decision to not include a thesis statement (7-6).

This extract shows a brief discussion about the need for a thesis statement, an aspect of general academic literacy. The task did not delineate whether one was required and what form it should take. Therefore, the group needed to exchange their understandings of thesis statements and assess whether one was required. They came to a decision and put forward their plan. The next extract will show a discussion about text structure.

4.6.3 Text structure

The ExT extract 7 (Table 22) shows Group 1 at the editing stage. This is an example of textual work, particularly signposting as a form of textual structure. At its centre, this discussion is about clarity of expression and the role of the text structure in that clarity, when a title is used to refer to something. The tension in this extract arises from the consideration of the best way to inform the reader.

This extract is a single cohesive exchange on one topic. This segment was begun by a bid from Yan, offering a section title. The group reached an agreement, a common understanding, that led to a change to their text.

Name	Turn	Group: 1 Stage: editing Exploratory (exchange 1)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Text: placement of referent
Yan	15-1	you don't have to (...) "section two". just put like "health safety work"	(ExT 1a) offer [bid]	Text: referent/ title Content: legislation
Su	15-2	but it would be more accurate, actually. I would like the "section two" part, to be honest	(ExT 1b) chllng	Text: referent/ title
Yan	15-3	I feel if I didn't ask her, I would just feel like "what is section two?"	(ExT 1c) chllng & expln	Text: referent/ title
Hin	15-4	no. We will explain in the literature review	(ExT 1d) chllng & expln	Text: referent & placement
Su	15-5	"health and safety, the company". okay. We are fine with it.	(ExT 1e) con.agr [understanding]	Text: referent + placement
T1/2/15	7	[dvd 2a 24:18 - 24:35]		

Table 22 Text structure

Yan believed the text reference to a section title should be replaced (15-1). This discussion came to be about perceptions of accuracy and clarity, with regards to a title (15-2). While Su preferred a numerical title as part of a sequence of sections in the text, Yan preferred clearer title (15-3). Such a clearer title was seen as more beneficial to the reader. It was implied that the other choice would create confusion.

An awareness of the structure of the essay was evident in the solution (15-4). Hin realised that the same sections would be repeated in the literature review. Therefore, the implication is that the section titles would first appear in the literature, meaning that would make the meaning of a title clear to the reader. Su agreed with this and the group closed the discussion (15-5).

The work in this extract showed an understanding of text structure, a general literacy issue, and how a group was considering the reader in the way that they chose their subtitles. This discussion showed how ExT can have direct challenges that encourage participants to contribute an explanation so as to convince others. This extract was important for my study because it showed how through collaborative work, one person can present a solution to a problem and have that solution assessed and accepted. The next segment moves to the planning of writing.

4.6.4 The writing of theory and data

The ExT extract 8 (Table 23) shows Group 2 at the planning stage. This extract shows a discussion about a textual issue, a way to write when combining theory and data. What is negotiated in this extract is the way to write about empirical research data to make it understandable to a reader. The group discussed a Marketing theory and Functional Convergence (FC). The tension in this extract arises from the need to describe research data (below), and the struggle to do so.

This extract shows two exchanges, with one following the other. The first is an example of planning a section containing theory, while the second is a discussion of planning for an application section. The first exchange (17-1) begins with an offer of advice that begins the discussion and culminates in a common understanding about Marketing. The second exchange begins with a bid (17-7) on the issue of FC, and ends with a common understanding about how FC could be explained.

Name	Turn	Group: 2 Stage: planning Exploratory (exchanges 1, 2)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Text: writing
Vana	17-1	I think for the market research part there, you should just write about what the purpose is generally, not what market research is. Everybody knows what market research is.	(ExT 1a) offer.advice [bid] & expln	content: marketing text: writing
Cher	17-2	It's what it looks like; research	agree	
Vana	17-3	[reading to self] (...) marketing / don't need to explain much. Right? just say what the four (...) are. "Marketing mix consists of price, place..."	(ExT 1b) offer.advice & Q.ver & offer.advice	content: marketing text: writing
Cher	17-4	"...promotion, product"	(ExT 1c) expnd	
Vana	17-5	Ya	agree	
Cher	17-6	and then maybe the function of marketing mix	(ExT 1d) expnd	content: marketing text: writing
Vana	17-7	Ya. like what the businesses use it for. That will pretty much answer the question. -I think functional convergence will be a tricky one	(ExT 1e) con.agr + expnd [understanding] (ExT 2a) offer.opinion [bid]	Text: writing Content: FC Context: task
Cher	17-8	Yup. Because they don't have directly what is / is to my understanding/ I choose to use this [?] organisation structure to express how [they??] [Company X] work together, but...	(ExT 2b) con.agr & explain	Context: agency Text: writing structure Content: research data
Vana	17-9	It's not exactly ...		
Cher	17-10	It's not even in the same chapter		Content: reading
Vana	17-11	not in marketing structure?	(ExT 2c) Q	Content: reading
Cher	17-12	no. Divisional structure is not in marketing structure	(ExT 2d) ANSW	Content: reading
Vana	17-13	no. no. Of course. Ya	(ExT 2e) con.agr	
Cher	17-14	It's in Organisations	(ExT 2f) expln	Content: reading
Vana	17-15	you only use a model to explain your answer. So, that's ...	(ExT 2g) offer & expln	Text: meta-l
Cher	17-16	what else can I do? I don't know how to explain how they work together. I have to have a model. Have their company structure to explain how they work together	(ExT 2h) con.agr & expln & expnd	Content: research data Text: writing
Vana	17-17	Ya. I mean, like I said, that's like a visual aid to the (...). You don't need to explain what the chart is, but use the chart to explain what functional convergence is and how Company X, as a company, work in terms of functional convergence	(ExT 2i) con.agr & expln & offer.advice [understanding]	Text: meta-l & visual aid & writing research data Content: FC
T2/1/17	8	[cam 1b 5:00- 8:43]		

Table 23 Writing theory & data

In the first exchange (17-1 to 17-7), the group builds a somewhat ExT discussion about Marketing Mix (MM). Since this is a planning discussion about a theory that the participants seem to know well, the discussion includes offers of advice, requests for verification expansion of concepts and understanding. The group were concerned how the writing of this section of

their essay would meet the requirements of the particular task question. However, this is a brief planning discussion.

The second ExT exchange included theory and research data for the company the group had studied, regarding the application of FC. Vana's comment about this subject (17-7), and its difficulty, functioned as a bid for discussion. There was an explanation of Cher's choices for an explanatory model to explain FC as it applies to the Company X. Cher was required to explain her choice of theoretical construct (17-8), and answer Vana's concerns (17-10,12,14). Cher also explains the reasoning behind her choice of a model (17-16).

Towards the end of the extract, there is a discussion of the importance of visual aids for explaining a complex concept. While Cher felt she needed a model to explain how the Company X worked together (17-16), Vana added to the discussion. She expressed the belief that the benefit is as an aid for explaining her "answer", which was from their research data (17-15). As she continued to explain, the model was not an item that would be examined (17-17). It only had explanatory value.

This extract touched upon aspects of context (task), content (reading (FC,MM), research) and textual work (writing, text structure, visual aids). The essay task questions were mentioned in this discussion, showing how the group discussions and preparatory work were driven by the task requirements. The task requires the production of a literature review, and an application-of-theory section, where research is to be described. This is what is driving this discussion.

The discussion showed how the writing and content were discussed concurrently with research data, and were indicative of the Business Studies genre. Particularly in exchange 2, the discussion encouraged explanation. These are the points of importance in this extract, for my study. The next extract will examine an example of writing involving citation.

4.6.5 Citation

The ExT extract 9 (Table 24) is a textual work discussion, on citation. This is an important aspect of genre and literacy because it allows students to show how they are participating in the debates of their field, by citing authors. Group 2 was working on this, during their editing stage. The tension in this segment arises from a literacy issue, the method of citing that the participants were uncertain about.

The following extract is a coherent exchange about how to cite an author and concurrently how to formulate the sentence with the citation. As the group was discussing the author of their textbook, Vana asked a question about an author's gender (1-1) to begin the discussion. Through negotiation, the group exchanged their impressions about an anaphoric reference to the author, and arrived at a greater understanding about the issue of citation (1-9) and how it can be written in a sentence (1-11), at which point it was written.

Name	Turns	Group: 2 Stage: editing Exploratory (exchange 1)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Text: citation & sentence
Vana	1-1	is Capon/ is that a girl or a guy?	(ExT 1a) Q [bid]	Content: source
Hank	1-2	who? Capon? It's a girl. It's a women. A girl.	(ExT 1b) ANSW	Content: source
Cher	1-3	A girl [laugh]		
Vana	1-4	so, I'm just trying to link this part and the second part	(out of context)	
Hank	1-5	"The author / the author defined the term..."	(ExT 1c) offer	Text: citation & sentence
Vana	1-6	I was going to say "She also defined..."	(ExT 1d) chllng	Text: citation & sentence
Cher	1-7	"the author" is better	(ExT 1e) chllng	Text: citation
Hank	1-8	She's [the author] not your friend	(ExT 1f) expln	Content: source
Vana	1-9	Friends	(ExT 1g) repeat [understanding]	
Hank	1-10	"...the term functional convergence as all internal elements."	(ExT 1h) offer & expnd	Text: sentence
Vana	1-11	[writing] "The author defines the term functional convergence as all..."	(ExT 1i) offer [writing]	Text: sentence
T2/2/1	9	[dvd 2a 13:50 - 14:40]		

Table 24 Citation

This discussion developed because of the need to cite an author. The discussion began to discover the gender of the author of a source text (1-1). Once the gender was discovered (1-2), the discussion moved to how to refer to this author. The choices they offered were a noun phrase, "the author" (1-5), and a pronoun, "she" (1-6).

This led to an ExT discussion where the pronoun choice was *challenged* by both Cher (1-7) and Hank (1-8). Hank explained his opinion that using a pronoun would imply that the author was a friend. It could be that Hank was, in this way, expressing respect for the author, by using

a formal referent. This comment was seen as being accepted by Vana. She used the noun phrase “the author” in the creation of a complete sentence, which she read aloud simultaneously (1-11).

The task required the writing of a literature review. Therefore citations were needed, which is also related to the Rule about plagiarism. This literacy issue shows how the group resolved the tension over the referent and constructed a sentence (including subject content information) and a noun-phrase referent for the author in the same extract. This is important because referring to the author is related to student voice. This issue will be revisited in section 4.10 (Table 54). The next extract will examine another aspect of voice, paraphrasing.

4.6.6 Paraphrasing

The ExT extract 10 (Table 25) shows Group 3 in the editing phase. This extract is categorised as a facet of textual work, paraphrasing. The purpose of this discussion was an inquiry about Fan’s text and his paraphrasing skills with regards to the use of authoritative source material (textbook) in a citation that he included in his section of the essay. There is discussion of the quality of paraphrasing and methods of paraphrasing, such as changing sentence structure.

There are two sources of structural tension in this extract. The structural tension for the group is the concern about plagiarism and its penalties. Through this discussion, a structural tension inherent in tertiary literacy was revealed. Often students write without having a sense for whether they have adequate awareness of genre or other aspects of writing such that they can fulfil the task requirements.

This extract contains one coherent exchange about the topic of Fan’s paraphrasing. It is important to notice the technique with which the group chose to examine Fan’s paraphrasing. There were a series of questions, mostly from Cheng. It is in this way that the group tried to understand how Fan had performed his paraphrasing. Cheng read aloud the text written by Fan, and discussed it with Fan and Zhan.

The bid which opened the discussion was when Cheng asked Fan if a phrase had been borrowed from the class textbook (7-1). The group reached two understandings. Cheng seemed to accept Fan’s explanation about his paraphrasing (17-19), and agreed with it. As they continued, Fan revealed to the group that he did not feel confident writing a literature review. This was a new understanding for the group, brought about by their work together.

Name	Turn	Group: 3 Stage: editing Text: Fan's Exploratory (exchange 1)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Text: paraphrasing
Cheng	7-1	So, from [reading] "the centre activities of any organisation". Is it from the textbook?	(ExT 1a) Q	Text: source quote Content: reading
Fan	7-2	(...) is from the textbook (...) show maybe change a lot	(ExT 1b) ANSW & expln	Text: paraphr (quality)
Cheng	7-3	But can you distinguish here if you paraphrased or just is from the text	(ExT 1c) Q	Text: paraphr (detail) & meta-l
Fan	7-4	things has been paraphrased. I didn't copy anything from the book	(ExT 1d) ANSW & expln	Text: paraphr & meta-l
Cheng	7-5	ah. So, it's...		
Fan	7-6	I didn't ...		
Cheng	7-7	so, it's your own words. That's why we have to revise	(ExT 1e) offer & expln & chlIng	Text: paraphr (quality)
Fan	7-8	but, some words maybe comes from the book	(ExT 1f) expln	Text: paraphr (quality)
Cheng	7-9	You can also tell us if here it's a paraphrase or not	(ExT 1g) req	Text: paraphr & meta-l
Fan	7-10	But the organisation business, the activity of any organisation (...)		text: reflection on writing
Cheng	7-11	From the textbook? [continued 7-9]	(ExT 1h) Q	
Fan	7-12	Yes	(ExT 1i) ANSW	
Cheng	7-13	do you know how much...?	(ExT 1j) Q	Text: paraphr
Fan	7-14	here. [reading from textbook] "at the core of any organisation"	(ExT 1k) ANSW	Content: textbook
Cheng	7-15	do you know how much percentage you think it's close to the book? Because you've paraphrased. So, maybe you can say how much percentage of them are paraphrased, and some are not. 50?	(ExT 1l) Q Q	Text: paraph (quality) [%=quality]
Fan	7-16	If just for the literature review, I think it's maybe 30	(ExT 1m) ANSW	Text: Paraphr
Cheng	7-17	30?		
Fan	7-18	30 come from the / 30 to 50 come from the book	(ExT 1n) ANSW	
Cheng	7-19	Okay	(ExT 1o) con.agr [understanding]	
Fan	7-20	What sentence has been changed?	(ExT 1p) Q	
Cheng	7-21	hm?		
Fan	7-22	(...) the sentence has been changed.	(ExT 1q) ANSW	Text: paraphr (method)
Cheng	7-23	oh, you mean the structure of the sentences?	(ExT 1r) Q & clarify	
Fan	7-24	Only some phrases. It's a bit hard to use my own	(ExT 1s) ANSW & expln	AS: self-assess
Zhan	7-25	Yes		
Fan	7-26	(...) from the book		
Cheng	7-27	Is this [points to essay] also from the textbook?	(ExT 1t) Q	Text: reflection Content: source
Fan	7-28	No. I just don't know how to ...	(ExT 1u) ANSW	AS: self-assess
Zhan	7-29	...paraphrase this	(ExT 1v) offer & expnd	Text: meta-l
Fan	7-30	No. no. How to write the literature review for this (...)	(ExT 1x) expln [understanding]	Text: meta-l AS: self-assess
T3/2/7	10	[dvd 2a 18:49 - 22:10]		

Table 25 Paraphrasing

This segment began with an assessment of the quality of Fan's work, and he had to answer questions. Fan reported his impression of how the text was paraphrased (7-2). Cheng sought an explanation of how Fan created his paraphrasing work (7-3), even implying copying, to which Fan responded that he had copied nothing (7-4, 7-6). Cheng then claimed that the purpose of the discussion was to revise the written work (7-7). However, Cheng was using ExT to do so, including challenging Fan directly about his ability (7-7). Cheng claimed that Fan's work needed inspection.

The discussion continued with Fan explaining where he sourced his information, in the textbook (Capon, 2008) (7-8, 7-10). He also went on to read that section from the textbook (7-14). It appears to have been the source for the phrase which he had written in the essay (i.e. 7-1). It may be that he was offering this as proof of the quality of his work, or so that his partners could compare his writing with the original. This could have been an effort to defend his work.

The questions about the quality of paraphrasing continued, with a discussion about the degree of change of the original sentence in the paraphrased writing, expressed as a percentage:

Cheng: (1) do you know how much percentage you think it's close to the book? (2) Because you've paraphrased. (3) So, maybe you can say how much percentage of them are paraphrased, and some are not. (4) 50? (T3/2/7-15)

These questions may indicate Cheng's perception of what quality paraphrasing is. According to her, a paraphrase could be judged by how "close to the book" it is (1), and that this could be expressed as a percentage. So Cheng tried to ascertain how much of the source wording was kept, in order to make a judgement. This could mean that Cheng had her own qualitative opinion of what good paraphrasing was. Cheng also assumed that a part of the borrowed text is not paraphrased (4). This could mean that Cheng was seeking to find any sentences, or words, which may have been copied verbatim. This exchange was important because it revealed Cheng's assessment of paraphrasing quality.

Through this discussion, Fan slowly changed his description of his paraphrasing. Early on, he claimed to have copied nothing (7-4). Later, he admitted to having taken some words from the original phrase, in the textbook (7-8). It could be that Fan was forced, by the comments, to reassess what was meant by copying and paraphrasing. It could be that he had initially perceived copying to be wholesale verbatim borrowing of lines of text, which he denied doing. Fan engaged with the quantitative discussion. He provided a percentage of between 30 and 50% (7-18) which reflected his estimation of the degree of copying that he had done from the original

source text. Nevertheless, this discussion forced him to re-evaluate his own work. The group then came to an understanding that Fan's work was acceptable (7-19).

Another theme in this discussion was the method of paraphrasing. Fan began a discussion of changes to the original sentence (7-22). From this, Cheng assumed that the structure of the sentence had been changed (7-23). Fan replied that his technique for paraphrasing which was to change some phrases (7-24).

The last issue was about Fan's lack of confidence in his own writing. He first explained that it was difficult for him to use his own sentence structure when paraphrasing (7-24). He then admitted that he had no confidence in his skills, and especially about writing a literature review (7-30).

The task and the rules regarding plagiarism were likely the cause of this lengthy discussion of paraphrasing, an aspect of literacy. The task set out that there was to be a literature review. Therefore, it was incumbent upon the students to paraphrase any citations properly. The danger of not doing so is that the group could be accused of plagiarism. Tension too.

This extract was important to my study for many reasons. It showed how an aspect of the task drove the discussion. It showed how a discussion of paraphrasing can touch upon the source text, the written essay and the qualities and quality of paraphrasing. The discussion showed how ExT can produce explanations and result in greater understanding.

A further note on the importance of this exchange is needed for the group dynamics. A group member assessed his own skills, and admitted to not feeling confident writing a literature review. It was important because it showed the structural tension inherent in literacy work without the confidence about what they are doing. The next extract will show a discussion of a further aspect of voice which is objectivity.

4.6.7 Objectivity

The ExT extract 11 (Table 26), shows Group 2 collaborating on the editing of their essay. This extract is about the expression of epistemic objectivity, as an aspect of textual work. Disciplinary writing can include claims about an issue that may be controversial. The strength of the claim, using language, can depend on having proof to support, and can depend on a genre (Hyland, 2000c). This is an issue of lexico-grammatical choice, and could be one of genre, as

well. The tension in this extract arises from the need to be relatively objective and a need for the group to agree on what they believe to be an appropriate degree of objectivity, and then express it in writing.

This extract had one topic, that of the objectivity of a particular phrase. This was a coherent exchange, though the group used humour as a manner of expressing the need for editing. The questionnaire and interview data showed that Cher believed the humorous exchanges were indeed amiable, and her experience of the session had been positive.

This extract was begun by Vana who, upon reading aloud a segment of text, questioned the use of a word (bid, 22-2). Through their discussion, the group used a hedged statement, created with a rapid exchange of ideas (to be explained below), to make a sentence which they judged to be more appropriate. In this way, they came to an agreement, an understanding and changed the sentence.

Name	Turn	Group: 2 Stage: editing Text: Cher's Exploratory (exch. 1) (m- ExT)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Text: objectivity/hedging
Hank	22-1	[read] "The price is high / the price is high because..."		Text: writing Content: research data
Vana	22-2	[read] "enjoy"? [read] "The best [BLANK] on the planet"	(ExT 1a) Q [bid]	
Vana	22-3	[laugh]	(humour)	
Cher	22-4	[laugh]		
Vana	22-5	What are you? marketing?	(humour)	
Hank	22-6	That's what she wants to study	(humour)	
Vana	22-7	"can be..."	(ExT 1b) offer	Text: hedge
Hank	22-8	"Basically speaking, like, the company is, like, the biggest"	(humour)	
Cher	22-9	[laugh] can I take this tape?		[the recording]
Vana	22-10	No. "the price can be high"	(ExT 1c) offer	Text: hedge & sentence edit
Hank	22-11	"the product appears that this service is more exclusive." Right? Like, no other company offers it	(ExT 1d) offer & Q.ver & expln	Text: sentence edit
Cher	22-12	So, now you know how Cerys (...)	(out of context)	
Hank	22-13	There are some things that...		
Vana	22-14	I won't say that the price is high. "But the price is reflective of the value the ..."	(m- ExT) seq 1	Text: sentence edit
Hank	22-15	"of exclusive"	(m-ExT) seq 2	Text: sentence edit
Vana	22-16	"the value of ..." -[read/write] "the price is reflective of the value of the products and services"	(m-ExT) seq 3 [understanding Decision. Writing]	Text: sentence edit
Hank	22-17	"that are often exclusive"	(m-ExT) seq 4 [understanding]	Text: hedge & sentence edit
Vana	22-18	[read/write] "That can be exclusive, commanding high price"	(m-ExT) seq 5 [Decision.Writing]	Text: hedge & sentence edit
Hank	22-19	"a high price" "commanding a high price" "high price"	(m-ExT) seq 6	Text: grammar
T2/2/22	11	[audio 2b 38:37 - 40:32]		

Table 26 Objectivity

The written phrase presented the company that they had researched as being “the best [of its kind] on the planet” (22-2). This superlative description was considered to be inaccurate. Vana and Hank raising doubts about the statement (22-5, 22-8). The implication was that the statement had no basis in fact, and was unsupportable.

The group then set about correcting the sentence. The development of the construction of the sentence took three paths that were eventually expressed in the new version. One approach was to express the high value of the Company X’s products (22-14, 22-16). The other approach was about expressing the concept of the “exclusivity” of the Company X’s products (22-11, 22-15, 22-17). A third approach to this issues was to find a way to hedge the statement (22-7, 22-10).

These concepts were exchanged in ExT work, as the group edited the sentence out loud. Vana spoke as she typed the sentence and accepted advice from others (22-14 to 22-19). The three concepts above were incorporated into the sentence (22-16, 22-18). This final sentence had the purpose of moderating Cher’s initial claim.

This issue of objectivity arose from the group’s understanding of the need to make defensible statements, which is an aspect of general academic literacy. As a learning event, this extract showed how a group progressed from theoretical discussion of hedging, to the construction of a sentence. The construction of the sentence showed how the group struggled to find an appropriate hedged statement. This tension was resolved through a rapid exchange of phrases, the nature of which will be described in 4.6.8. This was important for my study because it showed how participants recognised an issue of objectivity, discussed it, and worked to sculpt an agreed statement, that they added to their text.

4.6.8 Sentence-level writing

The ExT extract 12 (Table 27) shows Group 1 was in the process of writing their essay together. This extract shows the group doing textual work, mostly at the level of the sentence. The participants were creating sentences in real time, on a particular Business topic (Flexible Firm-FF). This section showed how the group built a sentence, and the other factors which affected this work. The members discussed phraseology and vocabulary for the expression of subject content. The tension in this segment arises from the difficulty in expressing subject content in writing using the genre, perhaps due to inexperience, or uncertainty about what language is acceptable.

This extract was a cohesive exchange on one topic, the creation of a sentence. Su began this discussion with a bid for a sentence structure that she was creating (11-1). The group worked on this sentence in a lengthy process that included explanations interspersed amongst the sentence-building process (e.g. 11-4). The group came to a decision to accept a particular sentence, and thus expressed a common understanding of the sentence and its message (11-20).

Name	Turn	Group: 1 Stage: writing Exploratory (micro-exploratory) (sequence)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Text: Sentence creation
Su	11-1	Develop creative a (...) and flexibility in the workplace (...). okay. as an introduction can I write “Organisations need to ... ?	(ExT 1a) offer (m-ExT) seq 1	Text: sentence Content: FF (textbook)
Yan	11-2	“have the flexibility of hours”	(m-ExT) seq 2	Text: sentence
Su	11-3	is this the same?	(ExT 2a) Q	Text: paraphrase
Yan	11-4	flexibility. We mentioned time and the work life. This is two things we need to mention. And we asked this before. “Organisation need to / not need to / this organisation offer the flexibility of hours. For example, the employee can schedule their time whenever they (...)”.	(ExT 2b) expln (m-ExT) seq 3	Text: writing research & sentence Content: FF
Su	11-5	not “organisation”. “Store X”	(m-ExT) seq 4	Text: sentence
Yan	11-6	ya. “Store X offers staff / offer/	(m-ExT) seq 5	Text: sentence
Su	11-7	“offers”	(m-ExT) seq 6	Text: sentence
Yan	11-8	“offer flexibility of hours” / “offer staff the flexibility of working hours.” “Offer staff the flexibility of working hours.” You can change my language.	(m-ExT) seq 7 (ExT 3a) offer.advice	Text: sentence
Su	11-9	“Offers flexibility...” I will write	(m-ExT) seq 8 [writing]	Text: sentence
Yan	11-10	“of working hours” “working hours”	(m-ExT) seq 9	Text: sentence
Su	11-11	“hours”?	(ExT 4a) Q	Text: sentence
Yan	11-12	And we can give (...) ...		
Su	11-13	Not “working hours. I would like to say “offers” / “Store X...”	(m-ExT) seq 10	Text: sentence
Yan	11-14	“Store X offer		Text: sentence
Su	11-15	“helps/ helps / Store X helps/	(m-ExT) seq 11	Text: sentence
Yan	11-16	“helps”		Text: sentence
Su	11-17	something more general. I will say “Store X helps their employees	(ExT 5a) expln (m-ExT) seq 12	Text: sentence
Yan	11-18	“Make a...”	(m-ExT) seq 13	Text: sentence
Su	11-19	“Make / to balance their work and life process”, or something like that. Then I will go to more in detail.	(m-ExT) seq 14 (ExT 6a) offer	Text: sentence
Yan	11-20	okay. okay	(ExT 6b) con.agr [understanding]	
T1/1/11	12	[dvd 35:30- audio 1b 8:48]		

Table 27 Sentence-level writing

This extract follows Su and Yan as they created a sentence. She had just read a segment of source text and wished to use the information to create her first sentence. Though Yan may

have not been reading the text, she was attentive to the information, and thus responded by trying to complete the sentence (11-2).

The next move was a call for reflection. Su asked about the quality of the paraphrase proposed by Yan (11-3). This was an attempt to compare it with the source text. Yan explained more about the reasoning behind the sentences they were writing (11-4). She then rephrased the sentence that they were trying to create.

The next segment of the exchange was a critique of individual words in the phrase that Yan had offered. The pair then proceeded to offer and counter-offer phrases and vocabulary for the sentence (11-5 to 11-19). Their exchange culminated in an agreement (11-20).

Through this process, they changed the sentence subject to give prominence to the Store X they were researching (11-5). The process began with the sentence describing the concept of schedule flexibility that Store X offered, and ended with the concept of the balance between work and life that Store X offered.

This extract was important for my study because it presented an example of a different kind of ExT, micro-exploratory talk (m-ExT). This exploratory discussion is indicative of literacy at sentence-level, in real time. There were a series of rapid exchanges, disjointed moves without the process of ExT, with the purpose of writing a particular sentence. It was like ExT because of the degree of co-operation. There were some explanations interspersed, which were also representative of ET discussion, but they tended to be interspersed amongst the exchange of offers of words or phrases, and not responded to. Furthermore, there were no challenge-type exchanges, as the members were not competing with one another, or (explicitly) critically assessing one another's contributions. The individual contributions were more like offers of language. This is also common in ExT. However, there was no organised exchange of other ExT language. Therefore, it is structured differently from other ExT, and cannot be simply called ExT. This was a collaborative negotiation in the interest of improving the language of an essay, at the level of the sentence.

This analysis also highlights the importance of the micro-analysis of extracts. This allowed for a greater understanding of the nature of the extract and allowed for a description that may add to our knowledge about ET.

In order to complete this sentence, the members had to find language that could be understood, while concurrently be conversant in the subject content they were trying to express. This shows

how literacy work is often intertwined with subject content, and how this work created a greater understanding of both, among the group. This discussion led directly to the writing of a sentence.

This section has shown how textual work topics arose from the task and showed how activity was engaged in to resolve the various structural tensions, including the participants' struggle to find appropriate language. This was done through a macro and micro analysis of the extracts. The next section will look at another aspect of literacy, that which is most closely linked to the Business Studies genre, because of the central role played by subject content.

4.7 The category of subject content

Subject content, as found in course notes, in assigned books and journal articles, or in databases or on the Internet, are a component of any essay task. The main source of Business theory content was the classroom group's book by Capon (2008). Other sources were used, such as classmates, and the Internet. Some content was also created by the students themselves from their own research projects, as part of their essay task. Primary data were derived from interviews they conducted with a local business, as well as document searches on the subject of that company.

The essay task is often seen as a method of assessment which allows students to exhibit their knowledge of subject content in essay form. In order to do so, they must consider how to present their perception of their subject content. This means that content discussion will tend to show that literacy and the subject content are intertwined. This process is also a chance to discuss subject content and literacy together, enhancing disciplinary learning. Certain members could also learn from the experience of others who may have a Business Studies background (see 3.5.9).

4.7.1 Subject content

The ExT extract 13 (Table 28) includes the negotiation of subject content. Group 2 discussed the theory of Marketing Mix (MM), while they were editing their essay. The extract starts as a discussion of sentence level grammar, as one sentence was being edited.

The primary tension in this extract amongst the group, about the categorisation of MM. Vana and Hank sought to focus on literacy by editing the essay, while Cher was seeking a discussion on a theoretical issue of content. These two issues split the extract into two exchanges, where one exchange arose out of the other. Vana began the discussion of sentence- level grammar and vocabulary by reading a sentence. This task remained unfinished as it was interrupted by the second exchange. The second exchange was begun by Cher's question, and it also did not lead to any clear new common understanding.

Name	Turn	Group: 2 Stage: editing Text: Cher's Exploratory (exchanges 1,2)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Text: sent. level Content: MM
Vana	7-1	[read/write] "In addition, the term marketing mix is used to control the relationship between organisations..."	(ExT 1a) offer [bid]	Text: edit
Hank	7-2	"organisation and the external environment"	(ExT 1b) offer & expnd	Text: grammar
Vana	7-3	so, it's either "the organisation" or "organisations"	(ExT 1c) expnd	Text: grammar
Hank	7-4	"organisations"	(ExT 1d) offer	Text: grammar
Vana	7-5	I don't think you need "the term" here	(ExT 1e) offer	Text: edit
Hank	7-6	Ya	(ExT 1f) con.agr	
Vana	7-7	Marketing mix is more like strategy rather than just a term	(ExT 1g) offer	Text: meta-l Content: MM
Hank	7-8	marketing mix		
Cher	7-9	Right	agree	
Vana	7-10	[reading] "Marketing mix is used to control..."		Text: edit Content: MM
Hank	7-11	"is a strategy to control". I think it's better than "is used"	(ExT 1h) offer & expln	Text: edit
Vana	7-12	what?		
Cher	7-13	like "marketing mix is used" maybe like ... Is the marketing mix a strategy?	(out of context)	Text: meta-l
Hank	7-14	"marketing mix is a strategy to control"	(ExT 1i) offer [No understanding]	
Cher	7-15	is it a strategy?	(ExT 2a) Q [bid]	Text: meta-l Content: MM
Vana	7-16	it is.	(ExT 2b) ANSW	
Cher	7-17	I think it's a way to analyse	(ExT 2c) chlIng	Text: meta-l Content: MM
Vana	7-18	to analyse	repeat	
Hank	7-19	it's a strategy of marketing. It's one of the main basic things to ...	(ExT 2d) chlIng	Text: meta-l Content: MM
Vana	7-20	Ya. it could be...	(ExT 2e) con.agr	Text: meta-l
Cher	7-21	I don't think it's a strategy	(ExT 2f) chlIng	Text: meta-l Content: MM
Hank	7-22	I know what you mean, it's...		
Cher	7-23	It doesn't tell you to do anything. It just give you a model how you evaluate this and that element	(ExT 2g) expln	Text: meta-l Content: MM
Vana	7-24	well, I guess that element is what you need to do something with when you ...[cont.]	(ExT 2h) expln	Text: meta-l Content: MM
Cher	7-25	Ya	(ExT 2i) con.agr	
Vana	7-26	[continued from 7-24]...want to strategise, right?	(ExT 2j) chlIng Q.ver	
Cher	7-27	the marketing mix just point out which element you need to deal with. So, I don't think it's a strategy	(ExT 2k) chlIng & expln	Text: meta-l Content: MM
Vana	7-28	"Marketing mix"		
Hank	7-29	what is it, then?	(ExT 2l) Q	
Vana	7-30	it's a theory of somebody or something	(ExT 2m) ANSW [understanding?]	Text: meta-l Content: MM
T2/2/7	13	[dvd 2a 26:37-28:50]		

Table 28 Subject content

The first steps were regarding sentence-level aspects of the text (7-1 to 7-6), upon which Hank and Vana were exchanging opinions. This included an exchange about a point of grammar (7-3, 7-4), pluralisation. Within this discussion there is the presentation of content knowledge. This exchange included a discussion of content meta-language. This arose from Vana's opinion that MM was not a "term", but a "strategy" (7-7). Vana and Hank then constructed a sentence with "strategy" (7-11). In this way, Hank was showing that he agreed with the categorisation.

At a point when all members were concentrating on the text, Cher sought her partners' opinion regarding the categorisation of MM as a strategy (7-13). Vana favoured the strategy categorisation (7-16). In response, Cher expressed her opposition (7-17) with an explanation of her opposition:

Cher: It [MM] doesn't tell you to do anything. It just give you a model how you evaluate this and that element. (T2/2/7, 7-23)

Cher critically assessed MM based on what she thought a strategy should be; it tells people what to do. She compared this to MM, which she claims functions like a model for evaluation, instead. One response to this was to explain that "analysis" is part of a business "strategy" (7-24, 7-26). All members were interested in this categorisation (7-29). However, the discussion ended by calling MM a "theory" (7-30). This discussion of meta-language ended without an explicit agreement.

This extract showed how, although there was no explicit understanding, the group exchanged ideas, particularly in the second extract, about their subject. The groups could, through literacy work, improve their understanding of the subject content. The tension in this extract was about the lack of resolution about the meaning of MM, which was an issue of subject content. The next section examines a discussion about research data.

4.7.2 Primary research

The ExT extract 14 (Table 29) contains a discussion of subject content. Group 2 were considering Operations Management (OM), and applying it to their own empirical research, in the planning stage of their essay.

The tension in this extract arises from the need to apply theory of Business (OM) to their essay, and particularly to describing their research data. This extract is a single exchange about the issue of OM. Hank began with a bid, asking for verification of his interpretation of his

perception of OM theory (16-3). He was trying to explain his interpretation of OM. The discussion ended with a verification of his understanding.

Name	Turn	Group: 2 Stage: planning Exploratory (exchange 1)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Content: OM
Hank	16-1	The Operations [theory] is very based on factories.	(ExT 1a) offer [bid]	content: OM
Vana	16-2	It's very manufacturing focused.	(ExT 1b) expnd	
Hank	16-3	but, I think I have to link it because [reading book] "process layout is like when similar implements and machinery are located together." So, should I link it [to a theory] or just say it? 'cause the operations are filling out a space on the different departments of the company	(ExT 1c) offer & Q & expln	Content: applic. of theory + research
Vana	16-4	Uhhm		
Hank	16-5	So, being focused on different areas. So, they're [Company X] separate according to that. It could be an analogy to the process layout when the same equipment and machinery are located together.	(ExT 1d) offer	Content: applic. of theory
Vana	16-6	Ya. I mean/ ya.	(ExT 1e) con.agr	
Hank	16-7	To at least have something to...		
Vana	16-8	I (...) the language there is for products manufacturing, instead of service production	(ExT 1f) expnd	
Hank	16-9	Exactly	(ExT 1g) con.agr	
Vana	16-10	but I mean, ya. Read between the lines	(ExT 1h) offer (advice)	content: OM
Hank	16-11	Ya	(ExT 1i) con.agr [understanding]	
Vana	16-12	and apply it to the service industry.	(ExT 1j) expnd	Content: applic. of theory
T2/1/16	14	[cam 1a 37:42 - 38:49]		

Table 29 Primary research

The discussion began about OM. Vana and Hank agreed that on how Operations was "manufacturing focused" (16-1, 16-2, 16-8). However, Hank was presented with a difficulty. The company that the group were studying was not in manufacturing, but services (16-12). Therefore, this caused a problem in applying the concept of "layout" to that company (16-5).

Hank explained his interpretation of the "process" layout, which he applied. Initially, Vana agrees with this interpretation. However, she later offers her understanding on the applicability

of a manufacturing-focused theory to a service company (16-12). To her, it was a question of going beyond the model to applying it in a fashion that made sense. It was their task to see beyond the letters in the book, to the intent of the model:

Vana: but I mean, ya. Read between the lines (T2/1/16-10)...[continued] and apply it to the service industry. (T2/1/16-12)

It also showed the way that tasks make demands of students and their literacy awareness.

The micro analysis shows how this extract was an opportunity for Hank to explain his work, and ask for verification. That having happened, the tension was resolved. This shows how the task made demands of the participants as regards how to apply theory to research data. This was also an important extract because it showed how primary research is part of literacy discussion, because of the requirement to write about research.

The next section will look at the effect of context on literacy activity.

4.8 The category of context

As mentioned in the literature, university students who are writing an essay task are working in a context that affects the work at hand. Being that this is an out-of-class literacy discussion, students have a choice of what issues to discuss and how to make use of them. This study has discovered that these contextual factors can have an effect on the students' literacy work during their task. These aspects of the context are not those which are directly involved in the writing of the essay. However, they can factor in discussions and even in the eventual text by virtue of their importance to the participants.

Context can have many different meanings, this study will examine representations of the people, events or items that have a peripheral role. Three of these will be shown in this study. These contextual items are mentioned in group discussion by participants because of their importance to the task. One relevant contextual factor is the various disciplinary and literacy tutors that students have contact with, or their words and actions. The context could include the processes surrounding the writing, such as the essay task, and its instructions. Further, the immediate surroundings of the literacy events themselves are also key. They include the students individually and as members of a literacy group, each of whom have their own personal and learning contexts to consider, as well as group dynamics.

Incorporating an awareness of these contextual factors into the writing task itself, shows how complex literacy work is. If it factors in the discussion and writing, then it is part of literacy practice. Therefore, the category of context could even be viewed as an aspect of literacy. This next segment will exemplify, describe and analyse the major types of contextual factors in the data, and the role they played in the literacy group work of the participants in this study.

4.8.1 Tutor as local agent of the genre

The ExT extract 15 (Table 30), during the planning stage, is about a contextual issue, in part. The topic that runs through this extract is that of the literature review (LR), about how to complete it, and what to include in it. This however involved the representation of the tutor in his role of the person who set the task. The tutor factors in many discussions in my study, but rarely is the tutor the topic of a whole extract. In this extract, though, the tutor factors in a few ways: the intentions of the task; as the receiver of a question regarding the task; respondent to a question. The tension in this extract arises from the participants' perceived need to interpret the tutor's instructions and the intention of those instructions.

This extract is focused on the LR and issues regarding how to write it, and is unified around interpreting the tutor's intentions for the writing of the task. This extract is thus two exchanges wherein the group have a complex issue to solve for one of the members in each. This extract was begun by a bid from Hank (10-1) wherein he represents the tutor's intention for the LR that they were to write. The discussion was stepped such that the group reached more than one understanding about issues regarding the LR.

Name	Turn	Group: 3 Stage: planning Exploratory (exchanges 1,2)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Content: research- LR Context: tutor
Hank	10-1	Because as he [Mr Tutor] wants / he clearly wants concepts based on the book. So, he should have more [room for] literature review to explain the things that he wants us to tell about. That's the problem.	(ExT 1a) offer (opinion) expln [bid]	Context: Tutor's goal implied Text: word count
Vana	10-2	ya. We'll just stick to the book because ... I'm not research anything else because they may have different concepts or something. So I'm sticking to the book. Our literature review is the book, pretty much.	(ExT 1b) con.agr & expln	Content: reading text
Cher	10-3	ya. You have no space for other books anyway	(ExT 1c) con.agr & expln	Text: reading & word count
Hank	10-4	Even if you wanted to	(ExT 1d) expnd	
Vana	10-5	Okay	(ExT 1e) con.agr [understanding]	
Cher	10-6	what about your part?	(ExT 2a) Q [bid]	Text : individual writing
Vana	10-7	My part?		
Cher	10-8	Human resource, right?		
Vana	10-9	I'll stick to the PowerPoint [structure] as well. As in, with the right legislations, if you look it up online, there are two dozen, three dozens legislations that companies have to follow, or something. But I e-mailed him [Mr Tutor]. And I said "look, it's impossible to include all these legislations." So, he said to just pick a few. the really important ones and the ones that really apply to the company. So I picked three, I think. -where is the PowerPoint? [searching] -Ya. So, mine was health and safety, equal opportunity and time off and (...). And the other part is flexible work or flexible firm. It's what he called it. So ya. I'm gonna focus on these three. And obviously I'll just acknowledge that there are so many other legislations that apply to companies in the UK	(ExT 2b) ANSW & expln	Text : individual writing; organisation Content: HR Context: previous writing & Tutor (questioned) Context: Tutor answer
Cher	10-10	of course	agree [understanding]	
Vana	10-11	but, for this particular company analysis, I'm gonna focus on these three. So, that's pretty much about it. I still have to interview one of the Company X person to get more details.	repeat (ExT 2c) expnd	Content: Research (future interview)
T2/1/10	15	[cam 1a 28:35- 30:50]		

Table 30 Tutor as local agent of the genre

The first issue was raised by Hank about the segment of text that he was to write. He claimed to have interpreted the tutor's intention for the content in the LR. Hank thought that the tutor wanted the students to use their key course book (Capon, 2008) as their source of the concepts for the literature. This, and the lack of sufficient space to negotiate other authors' ideas is

associated, by all three members, with the choice of the course book as their only source. This was expressed most clearly by Cher (10-3).

In discussing the content of the LR for Vana, a similar issue arose. Vana felt she needed to interpret a part of the task question, in order to write her segment. In order to investigate this, she had contacted the tutor by email, prior to this writing session. In this case, Vana found that the source documents for her section (legislation) were far too great in size to fit in her literature section. She then explained how she had asked the tutor a question, by email (10-9), and how he had responded. She also explained how she then interpreted this advice for her theory section and for her research of a company (for a different section). This discussion, as with Hank's discussion, were both beneficial for the group to compare issues of task interpretation.

The extract was important because it showed the group trying to interpret the intention of the task, and the tutor, in a dialectic with the task. The task does raise such tensions where students do not understand the intention or reason for a task. In the first exchange, the tension was resolved by a decision, while in the second it was resolved by a question to the tutor, and explained in this exchange, so that the other members could learn. The second exchange was an issue of the expression of subject content, and so, related to the genre.

This extract was important for the study because it showed how the context of the activity, the tutor and the task, can factor in a discussion and in a writing task. The next section will deal with a decision to consult the tutor arising from the discussion.

4.8.2 Seeking consultation

The ExT extract 16 (Table 31) shows Group 2 in the planning stage of their essay. The discussion in this extract is about the structure of the essay sections, particularly the literature review. Associated with this is the role of the tutor as the person who set the task and thus the rules about the genre, whose approval is needed, whose advice is sought, and who is critiqued. The focus of this analysis will be the role of the tutor in the participants' literacy process.

The structural tension in this extract arises from the essay task. The tutor's task provided the rules that the students are responsible for interpreting. Their inexperience with this tutor's tasks may have led to a structural tension. In the process of the participants' analysis of the task, the tutor, who was to be consulted, was a source of advice, thus solving the points of tension.

This extract is made up of a number of different exchanges about issues related to the structure of their essay and the role of the tutor in their work. Not every exchange is productive, but they all play a role in the overall decision. The extract discussion is opened by a bid from Hank (9-2) who offers to speak to the tutor about the structure of the essay. The extract discussion essentially ends with a common understanding about the group's course of action, when Hank states that the teacher's decision on their question will decide the structure of their essay.

Name	Turn	Group: 2 Stage: planning Exploratory: (Exchanges 1-4)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Text: structure Context: task
Cher	9-1	200 words. It's hard. Okay		
Hank	9-2	So, ya. so 500 for each. I'm just going to talk to him to make sure he's alright with the structure	(ExT 1a) offer.to ask tutor) [bid]	Content: structure Context: tutor (advice)
Vana	9-3	the structure? [previously mentioned]	(ExT 1b) Q	
Hank	9-4	I think it makes more sense	(ExT 1c) expln	Content: structure
Vana	9-5	I agree	(ExT 1d) con.agr [understanding]	
Cher	9-6	But we have to put headings. "Literature review" right? in each section	(ExT 2a) Q [bid]	Text: genre awareness
Hank	9-7	That's not what I'm thinking.	(ExT 2b) chllng	
Vana	9-8	ya. I feel like it's kind of silly to actually put literature review	(ExT 2c) con.agr	
Hank	9-9	it's silly. Yes. (...) have to tell	(ExT 2d) con.agr	
Cher	9-10	How can he tell that is literature review?	(ExT 2e) chllng	Text: meta-l
Hank	9-11	According to /		
Vana	9-12	well. Ya. if you...		
Hank	9-13	that's the concept of this. This is the same	(ExT 2f) expln	
Vana	9-14	If you're talking about Company X, it's got to be the theories, right?	(ExT 2g) expnd [end]	Content: research
Hank	9-15	Literature review is made of referencing books and articles. The literature review is literature that has been published about it.	(ExT 3a) expln [bid]	Text: LR model
Cher	9-16	Research Class, we have a section called / we have a chapter called "Literature Review"	(ExT 3b) chllng	Text: LR model Context: other class/writing
Vana	9-17	ya. But that's a whole section that is related to your research. It's just one topic. But, this is three topics. How do you connect human resource, like different theories and all that? that you know are probably related if you have 2000 words to write it, but not in 300 words / or what was it?	(ExT 3c) chllng [end]	text: structure, meta-language & LR model Context: other class/writing
Cher	9-18	we should talk about it in advance.	(ExT 4a) offer [bid]	Context: Tutor (advice)
Vana	9-19	we should discuss it with Mr Tutor, tomorrow	(ExT 4b) con.agr & expnd	Context: Tutor (advice)
Hank	9-20	if he says no, we'll have to make it separate. like literature review and (...) over	(ExT 4c) con.agr & expnd	Context: Tutor (rules)
Cher	9-21	Like Research Class		Context: other class
Vana	9-22	It's kind of silly. Say, everyone writes about a hundred words each, so you have three sections with just four lines, five lines talking about theories.	(ExT 4d) offer.opinion	text: LR Context: Tutor (critique)
Hank	9-23	it's really silly when it has to be so little about the literature review.	(ExT 4e) expnd	text: LR Context: Tutor (critique)
Vana	9-24	ya and (...) will be even worse. she's got three subsections already.	(ExT 4f) expnd	
Hank	9-25	why can't she say like "marketing is this" "functional"...	(ExT 4g) Q	
Vana	9-26	so, it's like 20 or 30 odd words on each section. That's ...		

Cher	9-27	That's impossible	(ExT 4h) offer [end]	Context: Tutor (critique)
Vana	9-28	that's like one line, two lines.		
Cher	9-29	I have to be a philosopher to ...		
Vana	9-30	Ya. we'll stick to this idea and ask him tomorrow	(ExT 5a) offer [bid]	Context: Tutor (advice)
Hank	9-31	If not we'll have to rearrange it	(ExT 5b) expnd	Content: structure Context: Tutor (rules)
Vana	9-32	But ya we'll ...		
Hank	9-33	Because as he wants / he clearly wants concepts based on the book. So, he should have more literature review to explain the things that he wants us to tell about. That's the problem.	(ExT 5c) expln [understanding]	Context: Tutor (critiqued) & tutor's intention (surmised)
T2/1/9	16	[cam 1a 25:52- 28:47]		

Table 31 Consultation and critique

After Hank's bid, there is a brief discussion between Hank (9-1,9-4) and Vana (9-3, 9-5) about their choice of structure for their literature review, showing their agreement. The next exchange is regarding whether to label the section as a literature review, where Cher (9-10) disagreed with Hank (9-7) and Vana (9-8). They did not come to a decision.

A short discussion about the connection between the literature and the research (9-13, 9-14) was followed by a discussion about literature reviews. In this exchange, Hank (9-15) describes how a literature review contains "published" works that are "referenced." Cher (9-16) then linked the concept of the literature review with the group's research-method course, which has a long essay containing one. That gave Vana (9-17) the chance to challenge the comparison between the two literature reviews (theirs and that of the other course). In so doing, she explains how one literature review is about one topic and it is related to research for that essay. She then presented their Business essay as being about three issues, unrelated to one another. This provided a useful discussion but there was no overt agreement amongst the members.

The discussion about a plan of action that was repeated twice. There was a concern that the problem be resolved soon (9-18), leading to the need for consulting the tutor (9-19, 30). The interpretation of the tutor's decision and its effect was then mentioned as a form of summary (9-20, 31). The group was determined to argue in favour of their structure, but ready to accept the tutor's decision.

The group then discuss their critique of the task (9-22 to 9-29 & 9-33). The basis of their critique was that it was too short for the writing that the group wanted to do. This discussion was, at many points, a critique of the task, if not the tutor as well. The members all agreed that

they wanted to write more than they were allowed. This does include an overt agreement, but it is clear that they all agree.

Though this extract showed how a tension was set to be resolved. This tension was partly to do with the task and partly the difference of opinion between the group and what the tutor's opinion was reputed to be. There was also a tension within the group regarding Hank's idea for the structure of the text, as Cher was not supportive. The resolution in this case would come from a consultation with the tutor. This was important for my study because it showed a number of tensions revolving around the issue of text structure, and the task rules about it, and the tutor. This shows how context again factored in a discussion. The next section will show how the tutor's lesson was brought into a discussion.

4.8.3 Tutor's advice

The ExT extract 17 (Table 32) shows Group 3 in the planning stage. This discussion shows an examination of the Functional Convergence (FC) part of the essay. The tension in this discussion is (the differing degrees of knowledge about) how to write about the FC issue, amongst the members. The tutor's advice was key to solving this tension.

This whole extract contains a number of small segments. The group began this discussion with a statement from Fan about FC (1-1). The group did not come to any new understanding in this segment, but there was a minor point of awareness-raising (1-6).

Name	Turn	Group: 3 Stage: Planning Exploratory (exchanges 1-2)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Content: FC
Fan	1-1	(...) the functional ...	(ExT 1a) [bid]	
Cheng	1-2	oh, ya. it should be in my part	(ExT 1b) offer	
Fan	1-3	Yes	agree	
Cheng	1-4	Well, I can take that part. I will probably more focus on how the floor staff cooperate with the kitchen staff.	(ExT 1c) expln	Content: research
Zhan	1-5	Yes	agree	
Cheng	1-6	I know Mr Tutor give an example. He said you should consider the whole environment rather than only one department in this business. Do you have an idea about this? how to write, this, which you put in your [PowerPoint] slides? They should be into the marketing part. the functional...	(ExT 1d) chllng [end] (ExT 2a) Q [bid]	Context: Tutor advice Content: previous writing
Fan	1-7	Convergence		
Zhan	1-8	is that this part?	(ExT 2b) Q	
Cheng	1-9	Yes	(ExT 2c) ANSW	
Fan	1-10	I think maybe we can ready make the business consider how to make the / make the / (...)	(ExT 2d) offer	Content: research
Cheng	1-11	the customers		
Fan	1-12	the customers to feel more.../ Maybe what is from you is to make the food more quick. Speed. Maybe...	(ExT 2e) offer	Content: research
Cheng	1-13	well, we can leave this part for moment, but we'll come back later when we writing	stopped discussion [end]	
T3/1/1	17	[dvd 1a 11:52-14:00]		

Table 32 Tutor's advice

The main theme in this extract is how an example of pertinent information about FC, by their tutor, was referred to by Cheng (1-6). The tutor's advice was dealt with positively. It led to a discussion of the application of this advice, which was recalled from a classroom session, and this resolved the tension of the discussion. The advice was about the nature of an analysis, and in the second exchange, this was beginning to take shape as a plan for recommendations for the company (1-12).

This extract was important because it showed how the lessons in class, can have an effect on literacy work. Because it dealt with analysis of a business issue, it was indicative of the genre.

It showed how it can aid in the progress of an essay task in more ways than one. The next section will look at the role played by other sources of literacy.

4.8.4 Other sources of literacy

Amongst the many contextual factors that affected the participants' work, there has been mention of the role played by other tutors or courses (e.g. 4.8.1). Those factors have been the courses that the participants were taking concurrent to the Business Studies class, such as the Research class. These tutors and classes were used as points of comparison, and helped the groups to progress in their work on their essay task.

The ExT extract 18 (Table 33) shows Group 3 in the planning stage. The main issue in this discussion is the plan for the introduction chapter. The focus of my analysis, however, is the way in which the group use their literacy knowledge that had been appropriated from other classes, to aid their processes for this task. The tension in this discussion is created by the needs of the introduction section of their essay and how to schedule its completion. It is apparent how this was a driver behind their discussion, decisions and the use of previous experiences in writing.

This extract has two separate exchanges with clear bids and points where understanding is achieved, in both cases. The first exchange is regarding the writing of the introduction and the outline for the introduction (4-1 to 4-5), including the timing of this, and content of the outline. The other exchange involved the apportioning of the writing of the introduction (4-7 to 4-13). In exchange one, Zhan's offer of advice (4-1) about the timing of the introduction functions as a bid. There were agreements about writing an outline (4-3), and what to include in it (4-5). In exchange two, Zhan (4-7) started the discussion by offering that the whole group write the introduction together. This discussion ended with an understanding on who would write it (4-13).

Name	Turn	Group: 3 Stage: Planning Exploratory (exchanges 1, 2)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Text: introduction
Zhan	4-1	I think we need to write at the last, to write the introduction (...) than / Like Janice told the Research Class	(ExT 1a) offer.advice [bid]	Text: introduction Context: other class & tutor
Fan	4-2	But our introduction maybe focus on the background I think (...) helpful for the....	(ExT 1b) chllng	Text: introduction
Zhan	4-3	great. Just a background outline. yes	(ExT 1c) con.agr [understanding]	Text: introduction
Fan	4-4	(...) the Research Class way, we need to mention a lot of things about the (...).	(ExT 1d) offer. expln	Context: other class
Zhan	4-5	ya. It's great	(ExT 1e) con.agr [understanding]	
Cheng	4-6	So, what else should we figure out?	(ExT 2a) Q [bid]	
Zhan	4-7	We can write the introduction.	(ExT 2b) offer	Text: dividing the writing work
Fan	4-8	So we have decided, I write the human resources, and you marketing, and she management, so can you write the introduction, and I write literature review? [to Cheng]	(ExT 2c) chllng	Text: dividing the writing work
Cheng	4-9	Why?	(ExT 2d) Q	
Fan	4-10	because I think the human resource is maybe a little bit short. I write the literature but I don't (...) with the introduction.	(ExT 2e) ANSW.expln	Text: dividing the writing work
Cheng	4-11	oh, I see because / I can do the introduction and marketing	(ExT 2f) offer	
Zhan	4-12	Ya. I can do conclusion.	(ExT 2g) offer	
Cheng	4-13	okay. So, we divided the presentation. That's fine	(ExT 2h) con.agr [understanding]	Text: dividing the writing work
Fan	4-14	So, Mr Tutor consider what will be covered in each class? Such as in the introduction.		Text: Introduction Context: tutor
Zhan	4-15	ya. I think that's important.		
Fan	4-16	in the introduction maybe covers the background and anything else	Repeated (4-2,4-3)	
Zhan	4-17	I can open the new document.		
T3/1/4	18	[dvd 1a 22:50-25:03]		

Table 33 Other literacy sources- Structure

The first exchange was about the writing of the introduction. There was a point made about the introduction as the last segment to be written. The group quickly decided to write an outline of the introduction as a starting step (4-2, 4-3), that they put into action (4-17). The last comment was about the content of the outline (4-4, 4-5).

In offering to write the introduction last, the reasoning given was that they had learned it from the tutor in their Research class (4-1). This other class also was a reference for the items to include in the introduction (“background”, 4-4). This shows how the students, given an opportunity to discuss an aspect of their task, resorted to recalling recent literacy experience.

The second exchange was about who was going to write the introduction. There are other possible interpretations of Zhan’s statement (4-7). He could have wished to start the writing of the outline, that indeed began soon after the second exchange (4-17). However, based on Fan’s response, the topic was the responsibility for the writing of the introduction section itself. While Zhan thought the group should write it together, a discussion began about dividing the writing of the whole essay (4-8 to 4-12). The basis for this discussion was the relative workload for each section of the essay, as explained by Fan (4-10).

This discussion was interesting in that the group’s awareness of a strategy given to them by another literacy broker, in another class, was used to plan the strategy for the writing of a section of text. This shows how the participants were able to take a lesson from another class and apply it to their task.

The Cumulative extract 19 (Table 34) shows Group 3, working in the editing stage of their essay task. The group was discussing the editing methods for essay work. The key focus of this extract is on the discussion of how some of the literacy brokers help the members with their literacy work by providing feedback. This is one kind of Literacy broker function. This extract was partly spoken in Chinese, and was translated.

This extract is not a standard extract due to the fact that the group is not negotiating a point of literacy. The important issues are the descriptions of the roles of literacy brokers. There is no bid or process of understanding as there is no negotiation of literacy.

Name	Turn	Group: 3 Stage: Editing *Chinese speech (in bold) translated and English	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Context: Literacy brokers & methods
Zhan	1-1	did you edit this or did Researcher edit the draft?	Q	Text: editing Context: Literacy broker
Cheng	1-2	I did it. I firstly added the part which I wrote and then I put both of your parts together. I did editing for your parts as well. I read through the whole essay and I deleted any word which doesn't make sense. Then I left it as you see at the moment. It might be clearer for you	ANSW	Text: editing AS: group's working relationship
Zhan	1-3	I thought he Researcher did it for us.		
Cheng	1-4	no. but I did send it to Researcher. But he didn't read it		
Zhan	1-5	it looks like what usually Bonnie did for my class.	expln	Context: Literacy broker & method
Cheng	1-6	usually a teacher always does like this. What I wanted to do was clarify what you wrote and what I edited [by highlighting]	Expln	Text: editing, method
Zhan	1-7	Kevin never does this in highlighting for us	Expln	Context: Literacy broker & method
Cheng	1-8	how does he Kevin do for you?	Q	Context: Literacy broker
Zhan	1-9	he usually prints out and directly modifies the essay on paper	ANSW	Context: Literacy broker & method
Cheng	1-10	the same happens for us	ANSW	Context: Literacy broker & method
T3/2/1	19			

Table 34 Other literacy sources- Literacy feedback methods

The key themes for this discussion are the editing role of literacy brokers, and the role of Cheng as editor of the essay task. There is an associated theme of the role of the researcher as perceived by some of the participants. This description will begin with the literacy activity of the members, mentioned by Cheng. It is apparent that in between research sessions 1 and 2, the groups had completed some individual writing and that the texts had been collated by Cheng (1-2). As a further step, Cheng had decided to perform some editing tasks herself:

Cheng: I did editing for your parts as well. I read through the whole essay and I deleted any word which doesn't make sense. Then I left it as you see at the moment. It might be clearer for you (T3/2/1-2)... What I wanted to do was clarify what you wrote and what I edited (T3/2/1-5)

As the analysis of this second research session makes clear, the purpose of the session had been for the group to edit the essay together. In this case, Cheng had taken some editing steps

by herself, before the meeting. She claimed to have deleted some words that didn't "make sense," in order to "clarify" what was written by her group-mates (Fan, Zhan). It is clear by implication that Cheng used the computer's highlighting function to colour parts of the text (1-5, 1-7). The wider context of this meeting was that the group continued the editing process, as a group.

The appearance of the draft with highlighted segments was the reason for discussing the editing style of the various literacy tutors that the group members have. It is clear that they each have a different literacy tutor (1-5, 1-7, 1-10). These tutors function as literacy brokers because of their habit of providing feedback. The formats for giving feedback include highlighted text, perhaps in electronic form, versus assessment "on paper," (1-9). This shows the role of the literacy tutors in the participants' literacy appropriation processes.

There was a methodological issue raised here because I was mentioned in the extract. It was also inferred that I may be engaging with their writing in a role other than as a research. That was not the case. I did not engage with the group's writing texts. I had been given drafts of plan documents and essay documents, but this was for the purpose of stimulated recall only. I made it clear that I was not interested in the writing itself.

This extract was important for my study due to the understanding gained about other literacy brokers, and about the group's working relationship in other classroom groups. It was clear that they all had a literacy tutor who had given them feedback on other writing tasks. This also implies that the classes that they mentioned were concurrent to the Business Studies, as was indeed the case. That feedback may have had a positive effect on the literacy work of the members, as shown in the extract previous.

4.8.5 Interpreting the task instructions

The ExT extract 20 (Table 35) is an example of the role played by the task instructions in the literacy process. The group was working together to plan the research for their essay. It is this interpretation of the task, to derive ideas for an essay that can lead to the building of understandings between group members and lead to planning, writing or editing of the task. This segment included a discussion of Cher's segment of the text (Market Research- MR), which she stated required some further research. In this discussion, they negotiated the forthcoming work, and the requirement for research data from their own study.

The tension in this task arose from the task itself, and the need to interpret it in order to complete the task. As this discussion is focused on the research for one section of text, the extract is one cohesive exchange.

This segment began with a bid, by Cher, in the form of a question about her research for her segment of the essay (2-1). A new understanding is reached near the end (2-11), by Cher particularly.

Name	Turn	Group: 2 Stage: planning Exploratory (exchange 1)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Content: MR Context: the task
Cher	2-1	The marketing research part. remember? There's not much to talk about. Remember?	(ExT 1a) Q [bid]	Content: MR
Vana	2-2	Market research?	(ExT 1b) Q	
Cher	2-3	ya. market research. Because they're already an information company.	(ExT 1c) ANSW & expln	Content: Research- company
Vana	2-4	no. I mean, I told you that they do pay other companies to do the market research, as well. right? And um...	(ExT 1d) chllng	
Cher	2-5	But, still there's not much to talk about. That part. So maybe I can do it within 500 words	(ExT 1e) con.agr & expnd	
Vana	2-6	We'll see how it goes when you actually start writing it and we can take a look at the theories later. -[reading the task] "discuss any market research (...)". Ya, I think it's better to be more specific with market research so ...	(ExT 1f) expnd & offer	Context: Task Content: reading, text
Cher	2-7	here. This is all the content about market research. That much [shows textbook]		Content: reading, text
Vana	2-8	ya. I mean I don't think we need to put all that much from the textbook actually because the question is to discuss any market research that the businessmen have undertake in the past or present, or any plans to undertake market research in the future. So, probably just general theory of market research. And then, I think you need to find more information about...	(ExT 1g) offer & expln & offer.advice	Content: reading, text Context: Task Content: research
Cher	2-9	Company X	(ExT 1h) offer	
Vana	2-10	not just about Company X. Just a particular market research they've done before because it says "discuss any market research". Right? So, I'm not thinking that he's asking you to talk about all the market research that they've done before. But, any one of them. But you need to go into detail.	(ExT 1i) chllng & expln & offer.advice	Context: Task
Cher	2-11	so, we have to pick one?	(ExT 1j) Q [understanding]	
Vana	2-12	ya. So just ask them any market research that they've done before. What was the process? What was the market research for? How was it used after?	(ExT 1k) ANSW offer.advice	
T2/1/2	20	[cam 1a 10:06- 12:56]		

Table 35 Interpreting task instructions

Cher wished to express her understanding of the work required for her market research segment, that she would write and research on her own. It was her understanding of the task

that she was expressing (2-3, 2-5). However, she was challenged on her interpretation by Vana (2-4) regarding the amount and type of research that was required.

The basis of the discussion was the degree of specificity of the writing. It was their different interpretations of this instruction that caused the differences in opinion. The textbook had a great deal of theoretical issues to impart, in the LR (2-7), requiring broad, general writing. There was the belief that theory was not as important as the research component, the applied part of their paper (2-8).

In order to solve the impasse, Vana and Cher consulted the task instructions (2-6, 2-8). The instructions asked for specific market research (“any market research”- 2-8). This was taken to mean general research about the Company X they were studying (2-9).

It was next clarified that MR existed. Vana interpreted that segment of the task and stated that one detailed MR study was required (2-10) :

Vana: not just about Company X. Just a particular market research they’ve (Company X) done before because it says “discuss any market research”. Right? So, I’m not thinking that he’s asking you to talk about all the market research that they’ve done before. But, any one of them. (T2/1/2-10)

In other words, Cher was to ask the company about one research study that they had conducted. It seems that this had been understood (2-11). Cher’s question implied that she had understood the advice from Vana. Advice was also offered to Cher on how she could conduct her investigation into Company X’s research study (2-12).

This extract showed how the task can be interpreted successfully in the process of a discussion. The discussion then turned to how to apply this knowledge to the research that was required. Since this subject was about research for the Business task, it was indicative of the Business genre.

4.8.6 Research method instructions

The ExT extract 21 (Table 36) shows Group 2, in the planning stage, discussing their research interview and the notes that were derived from them. The group had conducted an interview with a company, as the task had required, and were discussing how to use their notes. The

interviews revealed that for both groups 2 and 3, this was their first research interview. This provided many challenges for the members.

The structural tension in this discussion was the task instructions. This may have been due to their lack of experience in interpreting research instructions. The tension arose from the inability to interpret the intent of an instruction. The group was having difficulty interpreting aspects of the instructions, regarding the research process. They discussed the way that the notes were going to be created and presented.

This discussion had one central exchange about the research notes, with a number of facets. The method of recording was discussed, and what was to be done with the recordings. This discussion was begun by Vana (14-1) as she discussed the rules about recording research notes. The discussion did not provide any answers to the problem, so it appears that group decided (14-6) to ask the tutor at some future point, though no explicit decision was reached.

Name	Turn	Group: 2 Stage: Planning Exploratory (exchange 1)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Context: task
Vana	14-1	[reading the task] They say the group meeting should be recorded on brief notes.	(ExT 1a) offer [bid]	Content: interview Context: task
Hank	14-2	That's what I wanted to tell / to say in the presentation. But like how? (...) recorded.	(ExT 1b) Q	Content: Previous writing
Cher	14-3	is it by notes?	(ExT 1c) Q	Content: interview
Vana	14-4	Ya.	(ExT 1d) ANSW	
Cher	14-5	So we should write down what we have talked about, not...	(ExT 1e) re-phrase [understanding]	Content: interview
Vana	14-6	ya, but will that go with the essay or what? I don't get it. (...) those with the essay? Let's ask him tomorrow.	(ExT 1f) Q & offer advice	Context: task. & tutor advice
Hank	14-7	Where did we meet / record it?	Q	Content: interview
Vana	14-8	Before the presentation. Tuesday	ANSW	
T2/1/14	21	Context [cam 1a 34:57-35:40]		

Table 36 Research method instructions

This exchange involved the presentation of the issue of the research notes (14-1). It is clear from the discussion that Hank had not been at the interview (14-2, 7), nor had Cher (14-3). Vana was the one who answered their questions (14-4, 8) about how the interview had been recorded on notes. Vana's concern (14-6) was with what was to be done with the notes, and whether they would appear in the text. The inability to interpret the instruction was the reason why she offered to ask the tutor.

This was an example of how the studying of task instructions led to a question that the members could not answer. This was another example of the task instructions being difficult for some participants, some of the time. This was investigated in the interviews.

4.9 The Activity System subject topics

In a social activity, like this essay task, the participants themselves are one aspect, albeit fundamental aspect and central to the development of an activity. Each participant was engaging with a complex task, and is expressing their perception of the activity. This activity was but one of the many they participate in, as students, and as people. To some degree, the personal goals of the participants can come through in discussion. Agency can be seen in the

way a person expresses his personal preferences. This contributes to the group dynamics of their partnership. This could have impinged upon the writing activity in particular ways that are important for literacy research. This next section will examine how the issues that arose from the participants' work affected the particular activity.

4.9.1 Control over text creation

The next extract 22 (Table 37) shows Group 2 at the editing stage and presents an aspect of group dynamics. This factor is important because the participants are part of a social unit, and yet they can express their own personal agency. This segment involved a discussion about control over the typing of the essay, for the editing of Yan's written textual contribution to the essay. The tension in this extract arose from the group dynamic, and the issue of control of the writing. This whole extract is concerned with the debate about the person who would edit the text. Yan made a bid to control the editing. The short discussion that followed was largely Disputational. By the end of the extract, there was no agreement, or any sign of greater understanding amongst the members. The group did not exchange reasoning behind their positions regarding the control of the editing.

Name	Turn	Group: 1 Stage: editing Text: Yan's Disputational (exchanges 1a,2a,3a)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Context: group dynamics-power
Su	16-1	Move on to the Marketing	offer	
Hin	16-2	Want to read it again. Maybe I don't understand what you are ...	(out of context)	
Yan	16-3	can you send this to everyone as well? [email][to Hin]	(out of context)	
Su	16-4	can you send me as well your part? [to Yan]	Q.req	
Yan	16-5	we can change [edit] it here [points to own computer]	(disp 1a) offer & chllng & no resp [bid]	Context: Power, agency
Su	16-6	can I type?	(disp 2a) Q.req & chllng & no resp	Context: Power, agency
Yan	16-7	just right here. I can type and listen to you.	(disp 3a) chllng & no resp (ExT1a) expln [No understanding]	Context: Power, agency
T1/2/16	22	[dvd 2a 25:20- 25:43]		

Table 37 Group dynamics

The group were set to work on the Marketing section of the essay (16-1), beginning with an exchange of segments of text, by email (16-3, 16-4). The implication of this exchange was that Su would then control the editing of the essay text. Until that point in the research study, I had observed that Su had been in control of writing exclusively, during my presence. As a response, Yan made an offer to control the editing (16-5). Su's request had indeed implied that she wanted to continue to control the editing, as she phrased her intent more clearly (16-6). The last three moves were similar in that they did not answer to the intent of the previous utterance. The exchange of challenges showed that members did not explain their position, or ask for understanding. As the group could not agree, and because they were not making an effort to engage with each other's wishes, this extract is Disputational.

This segment was important because it showed how group tension can affect the writing process. It also indicates that the issue was one of the control of the process or of a text. The questionnaires and the interview also indicated issues about arguing. Most of the members, either through the questionnaire or the interview expressed the belief that their co-operation had been strained. This will be elaborated on below. In the next section, there will be an examination of another aspect of group dynamics.

4.9.2 Deference

This largely Cumulative discussion (extract 23- Table 38) shows Group 3 in the planning stage. This segment shows the group discussing the plan for writing a segment of their research, on Inventory Management (IM). The key focus of this examination is the deference afforded to one member by others. This is indicated in the discussion in which one person does most of the speaking. The tension arises because of Zhan's apparent need to understand how to pursue the writing of his section of text.

This extract begins in the form of an ExT discussion about Zhan's IM section. It however, quickly changes into a Cumulative exchange. This is due to the domination of the discussion by one member, and the acquiescence of the listener. The extract was begun by a bid from Fan, who enquired about Zhan's work (13-1). This included a long turn from Cheng. However, it is unclear whether there was a new common understanding being created amongst the participants. There is some doubt about this because to a lack of engagement by Zhan with the discussion that would have indicated deep understanding. Therefore, it is unclear whether Zhan had understood what he was being told. It seemed that Cheng was teaching Zhan. The reason for this was unclear.

Name	Turn	Group: 3 Stage: Planning Cumulative (Exchanges -ExT 1- cumu 1	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Content: IM & research
Fan	13-1	do you have some troubles in your part?	(ExT 1a) Q [bid]	Content: IM
Zhan	13-2	my part?		
Fan	13-3	maybe		
Zhan	13-4	I just think this inventory management could be right, not like the words could not equal the other part. The other part can have more and this part will be little.	(ExT 1b) ANSW & offer.opinion	Content: IM & research
Cheng	13-5	I think you can talk about ... -well, I think it's still possible to actually develop these two points. Firstly you would refer back to the seafood	(ExT 1c) offer.advice	Content: research
Zhan	13-6	yes	(cumu 1a) agree	
Cheng	13-7	as you mentioned In the purchasing part. There you can say "They prepare double amount food for the following day, they freeze it. For example dumplings, they freeze and like spring rolls. Also, you can also develop when you say why do they do this. Because some dumplings, sometimes it's not possible to make it on the day. So, you make a large amount. So, you freeze half them for the following days." Then you can also develop your points here. You could say "Compared to the one in London, they don't have a large consumption of duck, roasted duck, whereas here in University X, according to their research or like experience...	(cumu 1b) offer.advice	Text: writing Content: research
Zhan	13-8	your comments.	(cumu 1c) expnd	
Cheng	13-9	yes, yes. So you could also talk about more here	(cumu 1d) offer.advice	
Zhan	13-10	okay	(cumu 1e) agree	
Cheng	13-11	these they are just like brainstorm. Like you just have some	(cumu 1f) expnd	
Zhan	13-12	yes. points	(cumu 1g) agree	
Cheng	13-13	you can still. Because I think the manager in the interview, he really talked quite a lot. He gave reasons and he gave what he experience in the other restaurant, you could make some...	(cumu 1h) offer	Content: research
Zhan	13-14	yes	(cumu 1i) agree [understanding?]	
T3/1/13	23	[audio 1b 9:34- cam 1b 2:13]		

Table 38 Deference

This extract was begun as a discussion, during the planning stage, of the writing of the IM section of the essay, which was to include research data. The research data had already been

gathered prior to the research session. Fan (13-1) was enquiring about Zhan's intentions, to which Zhan replied (13-4). From that point onward, the discussion was dominated by Cheng (13-5). She presented, uninterrupted, two long segments of text, verbally that were intended as advice to Zhan. This information was derived from their research data (a restaurant). It did not seem that Zhan was able to note what was said, though he did respond in the affirmative (and 3 other times). This was the pattern for the remainder of the discussion.

This extract showed how Cumulative talk can occur in a discussion. The talk can turn cumulative when there is a perceived imbalance in levels of competency between members. It seems that one member may try to teach the others. However, because of the lack of engagement, it's not possible to see whether the receiver was able to understand the advice.

4.9.3 Rejection of a rule

The extract 24 (Table 39) shows an ExT discussion where Group 2 were discussing the introduction section of their essay, and particularly how the contents of that section were explained by the tutor. The group had the opportunity to discuss the rules and question them, with the result being that they developed their own way of presenting information. The basis of the tension in this discussion was the rules for the introduction.

This extract contains a single exchange. This extract was begun by a bid, a question by Hank (1-1), who engaged Vana and Cher in a discussion. At the end of this they came to a common understanding (1-18) about what their introductory paragraph would contain.

Name	Turn	Group: 2 Stage: Planning Exploratory (exchange 1)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Text: organising introduction Context: tutor
Hank	1-1	So, I was thinking everyone in the presentation was doing (...). But, how can I start the introduction with the companies? I mean, should we talk about the company in the introduction?	(ExT 1a) Q & Q [bid]	Text: introduction
Cher	1-2	I think so.	(ExT 1b) ANSW	
Hank	1-3	and (...)		
Vana	1-4	Ya. Mr Tutor explained it. All the (...) should be the overview of the whole essay and also an introduction to the...	(ExT 1c) offer	Context: Tutor advice
Hank	1-5	Topic	(ExT 1d) offer	
Vana	1-6	...company that we are analysing so ...	(ExT 1e) chllng	
Hank	1-7	Okay	accept	
Vana	1-8	Ya. It should (...) not done		
Hank	1-9	So, should we follow this structure?	(ExT 1f) Q	Context: tutor, challenging advice (see 1-4)
Cher	1-10	hm		
Vana	1-11	I think we should follow our presentation structure 'cause remember we started with operation management and you thought that might be a better way to start.	(ExT 1g) ANSW/ offer & expln	Text: structure Content: previous writing Context: agency
Hank	1-12	ya, but noone did that.	(ExT 1h) chllng	
Vana	1-13	it's as...		
Hank	1-14	(...) better. Ya. I think it's better talk like 'cause in the introduction we talk a little bit about the company and then you just talk about the operations.	(ExT 1i) con.agr & expln	Text: introduction Context: agency
Vana	1-15	what they do	(ExT 1j) expnd	
Hank	1-16	and what they do	con.agr	
Vana	1-17	I think it flows better	(ExT 1k) offer.opinion	Text: quality Context: agency
Hank	1-18	Ya	(ExT 1l) con.agr [understanding]	
T2/1/1	24	[cam 1a 7:05-10:04]		

Table 39 Agency

The extract began with an exchange where Hank (1-1) was questioning the requirements of the introduction, and questioning whether they should be followed. The response from both Cher (1-2) and Vana (1-4) was about how the requirements were correct and expected of the group. The advice of the tutor was also included as a further proof of the importance of the instructions.

The group then continued with a discussion of whether they should follow the tutor's instructions. Hank began this by asking the others their opinion (1-9). Both Vana (1-11) and Hank (1-14) expressed support for following an alternative introduction structure. They both wanted to use the structure from their presentation. Both of them also explained their positions with qualitative arguments. Vana added another qualitative judgement about the "flow" of their structure being better. Hank closed the discussion by agreeing.

This extract was important because it showed a group rejecting tutor advice. The task and the tutor's advice had been understood, but not accepted. The group worked together to improve their understanding of the reasons that supported their decision. This was one of the times where there was tension in the interpretation of the task. It is not likely to be a point of tension between the students and the tutor, but the tutor is closely associated with the task. The next segment will examine the assessment of members of the group.

4.9.4 Self-assessment

The social activity of group work occurs as part of the lives of the participants. Within the discussions, the participants may re-assess themselves or their understanding of their own skills. This reflection upon the self could be a result of the literacy process. A self-assessment can affect how a person views their writing, or approaches their writing.

The ExT extract 25 (Table 40) shows Group 3 partaking in personal assessment during the editing stage. This segment was indicative of a discussion which was not about their literacy work. The group was debating assessments of their relative literacy skills, and what this meant for their literacy work in this essay task and other tasks. My focus for this analysis will be the assessments that the members expressed about themselves and others. The tension in this extract arises from an issue of self-confidence raised by Cher. She was assessing her own literacy skills in light of a task that she was to complete in her Research class, by herself. However, the lack of confidence could have arisen from the immediate context of editing work that was often critical ExT on the topic of Cher's writing.

This extract consists of just one exchange consisting of assessment of members skills. This segment was begun by Cher whose expression of self-assessment acted as a bid. Despite some ExT discussion, there was no new explicit common understanding reached before the extract was ended by an interruption.

Name	Turn	Group: 2 Stage: editing Exploratory (exchange 1)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	AS: assessment of skills & support
Cher	20-1	Worrying about my Research Class [essay] now	(ExT 1a) offer.opinion [bid]	Context: self- confidence
Hank	20-2	I can't believe you used your first edition. Are you serious?	(out of context)	
Cher	20-3	No	(out of context)	
Hank	20-4	then, why are you worried then?	(ExT 1b) Q	Context: support
Cher	20-5	My writing	(ExT 1c) ANSW	Context: self- assessment & literacy
Hank	20-6	no. I'm also bad	(ExT 1d) chllng	Context: self- assessment & support
Vana	20-7	we just like to criticise	(ExT 1e) con.agr	Context: self- assessment & support
Hank	20-8	It's easy to criticise. It doesn't mean that mine is better than you, because it's not	(ExT 1f) expnd	Context: self- assessment & support
Vana	20-9	we don't see all the mistakes, right?	(ExT 1g) expnd	Context: self- assessment & support
Hank	20-10	except Vana. But, she studied in university for three years. We never did it. so she should be better	(ExT 1h) offer.opinion [understanding?]	Context: other- assessment
Vana	20-11	okay! [read] "(...) company, Company X products are basically...	[end]	
T2/2/20	25	[audio 2b 36:36- 37:24]		

Table 40 Self-assessment, Group 2

This extract was begun by Cher (20-1) who assessed her own skills negatively. She referred to the difficulty she thought she would have with her Research Class essay because she believed her writing was weak (20-5). This opinion was challenged by both Hank (20-6, 20-9) and Vana (20-7). Hank assessed himself negatively seemingly in order to show support. However, Vana's contribution indicated something of the context of the work sessions. Vana explained how she and Hank tended to be very critical. This critical approach may have been the reason why Cher professed her negative self-assessment.

This extract was important because of the appearance of the issue of self-awareness. As this occurred during their session, and appears to have been caused by her fellow members, it can be seen how confidence plays a role in literacy. An alternative explanation may lie in Cher's

Questionnaire 1 data (see Table 4) which show that she believed her writing to be not satisfactory. This could indicate that the task is causing Cher to continue to not have confidence in her work. The next segment examines a case where a member claims to not have confidence in a specific example of his own work.

The ExT extract 26 (Table 41) shows Group 3 in the editing stage, discussing Fan's text. In this extract, the group were discussing the organisation of the human resources (HR) section. My focus will be on Fan's admission about not being able to write sufficiently well, in his own opinion. The tension in this discussion could be interpreted as having come from a member not being able to write, due to inexperience.

This extract contains one exchange on the textual work topic of writing style. Cheng begins this extract with an assessment of Fan's writing. During this extract, it is unclear whether Fan came to an understanding about the advice, or whether he agreed. However, he was discussing the issue readily.

Name	Turn	Group: 3 Stage: editing Text: Fan's Exploratory (exchange 1)	MICRO ANALYSIS	TOPIC ANALYSIS
			[MACRO ANALYSIS]	Text: style Context: (self) assessment
Cheng	12-1	you know? The problem with these paragraphs, they / you kind of talk / you kind of like, it's like what you're gonna say in a presentation	(ExT 1) offer.opinion [bid]	Text: style
Fan	12-2	ya. But, I don't know how to...	(ExT 1) con.agr	Text: style Context: self- assessment
Cheng	12-3	well you can just say / It's like an essay. you don't say, you see here [read] "a short introduction for the structure will be given"	(ExT 1) offer.opinion	
Fan	12-4	If I just talk about the background of the human resource structure maybe...	(ExT 1) offer	Content: HR
Cheng	12-5	No. You can just say "in this restaurant" how many people they have	(ExT 1) chllng & offer	Content: research data
Zhan	12-6	Yes	agree	
Cheng	12-7	and then "the working time blah blah blah. There are only...	(ExT 1) offer	
Fan	12-8	If the human resources talking about things such as legislation (...) and why I need to put this background information here? I just want to do something...	(ExT 1) Q & expln	
Cheng	12-9	oh. I see what / But so, firstly, well, I know what you mean. You gonna just focus on the legislation and flexibility of the working time. But you have to tell people how many staff members they have in the restaurant because you will tell people "They make sure three people, in the rush hour..."	(ExT 1) accept [understanding] & offer & offer	Text: structure Content: HR & research data
Fan	12-10	so, how can you organise it?	(ExT 1) Q [understanding?]	Text: structure
Cheng	12-11	yes. we are organising. So, you just say "the aspects of this in this restaurant" "According to the manager, it is not a big restaurant because it is only 16 staff members. Three of them are Chinese and the rest of them from the students from University X." So, you start from here. You don't need...	(ExT 1) ANSW. offer	Text: structure
Cheng	12-12	[read/write] "Small-scale restaurant which only contains 16 staff members" "Three of them are Chinese and the rest are students from University X who ..." "From different / from University X." you can see here "three of them are Chinese and the rest of them are students from University X in different nationalities and taking part-time job"	(ExT 1) offer [decision]	Text: writing
T3/2/12	26	[audio 2a 34:56-39:00]		

Table 41 Self-assessment, Group 3

The discussion began with a discussion of Fan's writing style. Cheng providing a critical analysis of two examples of Fan's writing that were indicative of "presentation" language (12-

1), rather than “like an essay” (12-3). In this exchange, Fan (2-12) had admitted to not knowing how to write, or to write in a particular way, though his phrase was cut off. This led to a discussion of writing style.

The remainder of the exchange showed how Fan and Cheng exchanging ideas about writing style. Fan explained his ideas, and awaited a response from Cheng. At times, Cheng challenged his idea (12-5), and at other times, accepted Fan’s idea (12-9). Fan seemed to accept Cheng’s expansion on his idea, and asked about how to organise it (12-10). Cheng provided two lengthy responses to this, including showing Fan what words she had changed in his text.

This negative self-assessment by Fan was likely a result, firstly, of the critique of his style (12-1), and perhaps because of previous group work, chronologically, where Fan was challenged about his paraphrasing. This had occurred in the same literacy session as the above extract. This is examined below, in an interview.

This section has shown many of the key themes raised by the groups’ extracts. It has studied them as examples of literacy work, shown the task dialectic, the structural tensions and the methods of resolution employed by the participants. The next section will try to acquire a new understanding on these events by comparing them with the questionnaires and interviews.

4.10 Triangulation

The main data gathering process has been observation which aided in the analysis of the literacy work of the 3 groups. This provided a situated analysis of the naturalistic activities of participants as they completed a collaborative writing task.

As the researcher, and a literacy tutor, I attempted to analyse the task dialectic, the dynamics of negotiation processes and the literacy content of the extracts. However, the researcher cannot be expected to fully interpret the activities of others, whether he be a participant observer in a familiar space, or an outsider. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate some of the literacy issues which arose in the activities. This will provide the participants’ constructions of the events and the importance that they gave to those events.

The next section will present some of the important themes from the interviews and questionnaires that coincide somewhat with the observation data. This will tended to give

greater weight to the observation analysis and provide further depth of understanding on issues of dialectic, negotiation, and literacy.

4.10.1 Questionnaire data

This section will examine the questionnaire data, explaining when they were given, and why, and present important themes from the data. There will also be some tentative connections between the data and issues from the observations. All these questionnaires were completed individually.

The first questionnaire (Q1) was distributed in their classrooms, at the time that I achieved access to the class, with the aid of the tutor. The data from the nine completed questionnaires provided baseline data about education and opinions regarding writing, groups and tutor feedback (see Table 4). The data indicated that the participants who had broad similarities in the number of literacy languages, in their family background at university, and their experience with 5000-word essays. They had all had a sibling or parent had gone to university before them, and they all had experience of long essays. This writing experience would tend to provide some benefit to the participants in the writing of this essay. The background in Anglophone studies could also provide a benefit for those who had completed a degree. In this study, six of the participants had a first degree from an Anglophone program or institution, while the other three had no such degree.

The remainder of the questions asked for their opinions. The question that inquired about collaborative writing was designed to examine their impression of the activity which they could have soon embarked on, within my study. The question also inquired about their previous experience of group writing. Five of the respondents indicated that they thought it was helpful, and most had had experience on which to base that opinion. Two respondents were very favourable, but had no experience.

There was one person with experience, however, who was not positive about the effect of groups (Yan- Group 3). This perception could have expressed itself in some way in the Disputational talk found in extracts 2, 3 and 22.

I investigated opinions about the perceived level of difficulty of the essay, and a large majority (7) expressed the belief that it was somewhat difficult, while one person believed it to be very difficult. That gave the impression that they felt challenged by the task.

The question about their impression of their own English writing, drew mostly (6 of the responses) modest responses (i.e. “somewhat”). The last question, about tutor feedback, drew relatively positive responses. That shows that they viewed the tutor’s role in literacy, particularly feedback, as important.

Taken as a group of questions, these provide a relatively positive picture of participants who were generally positive about their educational process that they were involved in, in their Foundation course. There was no one individual who presented themselves as radically different from the average.

Questionnaire 2 was given before the beginning of Session 1. It had several open ended questions, and asked about the reason for the groups’ creation and their experience together, and their plans for the Session.

There was an indication that friendship was an important motivator for joining a group. However, groups one and two had very short periods of experience together, limited to their PowerPoint process. In expressing their plans, the three groups listed their goal for the first session as being the completion of the structure of the essay.

The participants’ impressions of their first Sessions were presented on Questionnaire 3, given after Session 1. The questionnaire asked about what had been achieved and about how they had aided each other. Groups 2 and 3 were happy that they had planned the structure and divided the writing task. Two of the three members of Group 1 mentioned their arguing as the key component of their meeting. This seems to have been related to the Disputational extracts (extracts 2, 3 and 22) that were analysed above.

This information lent some weight to the belief that the groups had not intended to write their essays together in that session, or anywhere. There was a strong impression that they preferred to write individually. This quells somewhat the possibility that the lack of text writing in the sessions was a result of my presence.

Questionnaire 2b was distributed before the beginning of Session 2. The question about the work that had occurred between Session 1 and Session 2 drew very similar responses. Each participant had written part or all of the section of text that they had planned to write. This also confirmed that the participants had preferred to do most of their apportioned writing alone. In some cases, they had sent their texts to others, but had not met.

The same questionnaire (Q3) was given at the end of the second Session. The data indicated similar impressions from Group 1 about arguing. Group 3 also noted a disagreement. The data from Group 2 showed that Cher had learned from her editing work with the group and was positive about the benefits of group work. This could be compared with Cher's negative self-assessment in extract 25, that had occurred in that Session. It could be that the critique of her writing had helped Cher, while not improving her self-confidence.

These highlights indicate some of the notable data from the questionnaires. The following section is data from the interviews, which were all conducted in the hours and weeks after this last writing-stage questionnaire (Q3). It will be presented in themes, with emphasis on the themes that are related to specific observational data.

4.10.2 Interview 1

The themes in this section will focus mainly on the issues regarding the task that motivated the group to work. In other words, it will present some of the issues where structural tensions, mostly residing in the task, were addressed.

This was the first interview, and it occurred at the end of the second session, with each group. The recording session had ended, and I took the opportunity to ask a few brief questions in recognition of the fact that all of the groups still had some work to complete that day and the following days.

A first theme (extract 27- Table 42) was regarding the Disputational extracts that occurred in Group 1's session. According to the interview, the group had been struggling through a painful process. Various of the members tried to explain this by citing their problems in exchanging and working with competing opinions (Line 28). There was an admission of a lack of negotiation (Line 29).:

23]R: and what do you think the reason is for the difficulty? Is it the complexity?
 24]Yan: I think probably we have different opinions and not enough language expression, try to
 25]understand, because English is all our second language. So probably is another problem as
 26]well. and we all have our opinion and try to ... and we are all stropky? [laugh]
 27]Su: ya. that's the thing actually. We all think...
 28]Yan: We all think we are right [laugh] three of us, we are right.
 29]Su: And we don't negotiate usually
 30]Yan: exactly. Probably another group might be easier because that will be a good lesson, but
 31]we are like, we are all talkers
 32]R: I was going to solve your disagreements.
 33]Su: [laugh]
 34]R: How would you say you come to solutions? How would you describe some of your processes
 35]of coming to conclusions or coming to agreement?
 36]Su: actually I guess, we are three. If two agree, I guess we do it.
 37]Yan: two agree and I will say "fine" [GRP111-Lines 23-37]

Table 42 Disputational talk (extract 27)

This issue of the difficulty of negotiating was evident from the observation, and the members were aware of the issue. Therefore, this Group's work was hampered by the structural tension created by the group itself. This may have affected their finished product, and how much they were willing to engage. Therefore, it would have limited the benefits of the group literacy work. This is an issue of group selection and is not within the tutor's ability to affect.

A second issue, which arose from this extract with Group 1, was the issue of language. This is a reference to the language awareness of the members. The group, particularly Yan, tended to see the group's use of language as an issue which contributed to possible misunderstandings (Lines 24-26). This means the group was limited by language awareness, and perhaps limited by their concern for their language. This again highlighted a source of structural tension. The members, all of them, perhaps felt that they needed better awareness of language in order to negotiate, or perhaps to write the essay as well. This indicates an issue which would limit the Group's ability to complete the task. This is an issue of group selection, or of pairing and not within the tutor's power to affect.

These points raised by the participants themselves tend to provide some indication of the interpretation given to extracts 2, 3 and 22. These Disputational extracts were more likely to have been examples of group tension.

A first issue raised with Group 2 was the issue of genre (extract 28- Table 43). There were two points that were discussed. Vana and Hank expressed (Lines 12 to 16) the belief that this text was not an essay, as a genre. They described the way that their text did not have an

argument and proof (Lines 14,15). Hank claimed that the genre was more like a report (Line 16). Vana later mentioned that their text was like a case study. This was further elaborated on by Vana (Line 26), where she noted that the content was combinations of theory and application of theory (using their data). This shows an awareness of different types of texts. Their explanation shows that they understood their text to be different from what they consider to be an essay. This was not enough to indicate whether they thought the text was a Business Studies genre. Their mentioning of the qualities of these text types shows that those members had some sort of awareness of those text types. Those text types are well-known types that are commonly found in Business Studies courses (Gardner & Nesi, 2013).

6]Vana: Structures of the sentences. See if we can agree on something and make it more
7]academic
8]R: So, you were basically editing the paragraphs as well
9]Hank: yes
10]R: were you linking them together as well?
11]Vana: Ya
12]Hank: ya, but. like it's three sections. We have like different headings. So, it's not necessarily
13]flowing like an essay. you know?
14]Vana: it's not the type of essay where you have an argument and then everything /each
15]paragraph has to support the argument.
16]Hank: ya. It's more like a report
17]R: Did you find that you had to link paragraphs within sections? Or make them fit better
18]together?
19]Vana: that's what we were trying to, as well. But it's not a big issue, I suppose
20]R: What about the points you're trying to make. You're trying to make certain arguments or
21]points with your essay. did you check to make sure that those / that you agreed on those as
22]well?
23]Cher: (...)
24]Vana: The case, studies
25]R: A case study
26]Vana: so It's more like "Theory, application. Theory, application"
27]R: "Theory, application". Okay. So, you're citing your course book as you're going along
28]Vana: mm
29]R: so, how did you / you said you linked between theory and application. So you're taking the
30]data from your interviews, from your emails, right? [GRP211 Lines 6-30]

Table 43 Genre, Group 2 (extract 28)

Another issue that was inquired about, with Group 2 was their consultation with the tutor (extract 29- Table 44). In the process of discussing the structure of the essay, Group 2 had decided to consult the tutor, to get permission to go against the task instructions. The group had the occasion to consult their tutor about it. As they mentioned, the tutor had not allowed the change to be made. This instance re-tells the story in extract 16. In that extract, the group had decided to consult the tutor about it, and according to extract 29, they did consult the

tutor. This tends to lend credence to the belief that extract 16 was an accurate portrayal of student literacy activity.

37]R: okay. You were saying you were going to talk to Mr.Tutor. What did you ask him and what 38] did you get as a response? 39]Vana: we were just asking about the essay structure that he wanted, basically. We were going 40]to change things around a little bit. But he said to just follow the structure that he already 41]gave. 42]R: So that was the feedback, sort of 43]Vana: ya. Easier for marking purpose [GRP2I1 Lines 37-42]
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Table 44 Consultation with tutor, Group 2 (extract 29)

This presented an important point of tension in the group’s process, and this based on a difference of opinion between the students and the tutor. The students had a different opinion about how their text could be structured. The group decided in extract 16 to approach the tutor in between the two sessions. They did so, and the tutor gave a response that appears to indicate the tutor’s opinion to disallow their request. Therefore, this tension between students and tutor was addressed through dialogue. However, it appears there was no deep discussion between tutor and students about the reasons that the students had expressed for their opinion on the structure.

The first issue raised with Group 3 (extract 30- Table 45) was also regarding consulting the tutor. This question was designed to investigate any possible misunderstandings with regards to the task instructions. The Group had consulted with the tutor, as Fan had said (Line 50), in order to inquire about the Introduction, first of all. There was an instruction in the task indicating “background” was to be included in the Introduction. The Literature Review was also a point of confusion. There were apparently two possible interpretations. One was that these sections were to include information about the company they interviewed, or about so-called “academic information.” This concern of the participants indicates that the instructions were a point of tension. If the instructions are not understood by a student, or misunderstood, that could cause the student to not complete the task well. It is not clear whether the Group should have known how to interpret the instructions. This indicates a certain lack of experience with such tasks, nevertheless. The resolution of this tension involved asking the tutor, which the group did. This point was similar to the observation findings about points of tension found in the task instructions, whereby the students could not interpret them.

47]R: Did you consult with your tutor, Mr Tutor, for anything. Questions? Feedback?
 48]Cheng: we consult once
 49]R: What sort of things did you ask your tutor for?
 50]Fan: We asked for the introduction, the Literature review because before we did not know
 51]what things need to be contained in the background and the literature review , such as
 52]whether it is academic information or the background of the firms.
 53]R: Okay [GRP3I1 Lines 47-53]

Table 45 Consultation with tutor, Group 3 (extract 30)

4.10.3 Interviews 2 and 3

These interview sessions will be discussed together because many of the themes are investigated in both interviews 2 and 3. These were the two interviews that occurred during the post-writing period. Both of these interviews are of value for the opportunity they gave students to reflect on their literacy work and the on the role of the tutor's feedback that they claimed to appreciate (see Table 4).

The interview data from interview 2, which occurred in the week after submission, including Groups 2 and 3 (separately), was also supplemented by a questionnaire given before the interview (Q4). The data from both are presented together. The third interview occurred soon after the tutor had given the classroom group its feedback reports. These two interviews were an opportunity to reflect upon aspects of the whole process that the groups had been through, and particularly issues of literacy.

A first issue discussed with Group 2 (extract 31- Table 46), as with extract 28 (see Table 43), was the issue of genre. This was an attempt to see if I could garner more information about their awareness of text type. I asked again about aspects of the essay task, with emphasis on whether it was a Business Studies essay, to see what they knew about the genre that they had written their essay in. The first answer I received was about the precision of the essay (Line 37). Vana may have seen this an aspect of this essay, or of Business essays, so I continued by asking question about Business essay structure. This drew short responses from Cher and Hank (Lines 41,42) to the effect that they had not learned anything about Business essays. The three members responded by mentioning the word limit, the content and the structure as being notable (Lines 45-47).

33]R So, okay as a written task, what do you / What did you learn about business essays, then,
34]through this particular writing of the essay? What do you think you learned about writing
35]business essays? Either the process or the finished product. What do you think you might have
36]picked up?
37]Vana: Me. I think to write in really precise and within in a limited word / word limit. It was
38]rather difficult.
39]R: Did you pick up anything with regards to, well, the structure of business essays and why
40]they're particularly that way?
41]Hank: No
42]Cher: no
43]Hank: they're just more / it's different
44]Cher: he didn't (...) about...
45]Vana: it's not straightforward
45]Cher: the structure
46]Hank: the word limit and
47]Cher: the content
48]Hank: And the questions too, they were pretty much the guides we needed, I think. And we
49]could not go much different from that, as we actually tried. That (...) goes. We pretty much
50]answered the questions
51]R: So do you think it was an example of a business essay? or do you just think it was something
52]that you wrote
53]Hank: I don't really know if the business essay are usually like that
54]Vana: I'm sure it is like that. You start off with an introduction
55]Hank: How is it that it's called, a report
56]Vana: Business report?
57]Hank: ya
58]Vana: Business report is different. It will be shorter ...
59]Hank: it's not really a report
60]Vana: & everything will be like in bullet points. But I mean the sentences will still be the same.
61][TIME REFERENCE]
62]Vana: It's not like you have many ways about describing a company or facts. The language is
63]the same. It's just, essays are longer so the organisation is different. You have an introduction,
64]main body with different body parts. then the conclusion. you / there's a Literature review
65]which is not a business report, so...
66]R: Alright. And so what do you think, in general terms, is the relevance of this task or essay or
67]whatever you want to call it, to the business courses that you're probably going to move on
68]to? What sort of relevance would you say there is?
69]Vana: the structure can be any more different. It's a pretty general structure of an essay. I'm
70]thinking the relevance is the structure of a business essay and you can probably follow that
71]even when you're doing Masters. [GRP212 Lines 33 -71]

Table 46 Business studies genre (extract 31)

Hank offered a comment about how he believed that the questions in the task guided the group (Lines 48-50). He felt that the questions made the essay. Hank also mentioned a reference to the fact that the group tried to diverge from those task instructions (see extract 16).

My next question was about whether the group thought the essay was a Business essay. I was interested to know what the group knew about genre. While Hank (L.53) was unsure

whether the essay was of the Business genre, Vana (L.54) was sure that it was a Business essay. What followed was a discussion of the Report genre. Vana (L.58, L.60) seemed to know this genre of text and described it, with reference to their essay, as being shorter with bullet points. Although Vana could not name the type of text, she did imply that this text was at least similar to other Business genres that she knew.

Vana (Lines 62 to 65) then provides a complex comparison of Business reports and the essay genre. She firstly notes that she believed reports and essays (or their essay) had the same language, and the difference resides in the format, or structure. Lastly, Vana (L.69) opines that, though she found the structure to be “general,” that she believed the essay to be a model of a Business essay.

This discussion showed how Vana analysed the structure of her essay and came to the conclusion that it was likely a Business essay. It is not clear whether the group had thought of it as a Business essay while they were writing it. This series of questions was important because they sought to ascertain the group’s awareness of genre type and descriptions of that genre. Awareness of genre can be important to a student so that there would be less structural tension caused by (and greater experience of) the genre of an essay. Students tend to have greater confidence if they developed the way to write such an essay, once they have tried it before (Hounsell et al., 2008).

346]R:
350]For example it’s like in an argumentative paper, you would have made a few arguments or
351]points that you would have proved in the body. But with because it’s just a review of a
352]company...
353]Cher: we didn’t have main argument
354]Hank: we thought it was kind of different. More like a report. You know, just say what the
355]company does, not like an argument
356]Cher: it’s more descriptive [GRP2I3 Lines 346-356]

Table 47 Functional analysis (extract 32)

In this related extract (32- Table 47), Group 2 described the content of their essay, in terms of the function. It was shown that Hank (L.354) and Cher (L.353, L.356) both understood the concept of argument and recognised that their essay had none. There was also mention again of the report genre (L.354) as a point of comparison.

223]R: The next thing is, you met in this session here that I have on the video and you had to,
 224]besides editing and putting the thing together, you had cut away some language and some
 225]sentences and stuff like that. How would you describe that process? How did it go? Did you
 226]cut sections? Sentences? Words? Bits and pieces?
 227]Hank: We cut sections to make it shorter and stick to the word limit. We also changed some
 228]sentences that were not very clear or coherent. What else?
 229]Vana: We did try to shorten, like the longer sentences. Or, putting three sentences into one.
 230]A lot of word cuttings. [GRP2I2 Lines 223-230]

Table 48 Sentence creation (extract 33)

Another issue I discussed with Group 2 (extract 33- Table 48) was their work at sentence level. I wanted to see how they viewed their work, and what it added to their essay. The first point Hank (L.227) mentioned was the need to edit the essay to meet the word limit. This provided tension for the group in choosing which words to cut. Though this does not refer directly to an extract in the observation analysis, there has been an analysis of the group creating sentences. This extract (33) shows some of the motivation behind such creations. The goals of greater quality and more coherence were coupled with the need to reduce their word count. This gave the group the opportunity to reflect on their individual writing and make improvements. It's not clear whether the group improved their essay simply because of the need to meet the word limit.

Interview 2 with Group 3 covered two issues. They were the Business genre, and paraphrasing. As with Group 2, I investigated the members' understanding of the genre of the text that they had written (extract 34- Table 49). I tried many different questions to discover whether the group was aware of a Business Studies genre, by asking about their essay. Cheng first stated that this essay was not about real business work, and was theoretical (Lines 12-16). Cheng's second answer revealed the benefits of doing research in the real world (Lines 25-28), and Zhan also explained how it was similar for him (Lines 29-30).

9]R: So, I'll ask another slightly similar question. What do you think you understand about
10]business essays because of this task? What do you understand better? Or what did you pick
11]up?
12]Cheng: As far as I'm concerned, we could see from the interview, we could really link the
13]knowledge in the lectures to adapt to the real business, but it's in general, it's still very much
14]work on papers and very abstract because we still / the way we say it's put into practice, it's
15]not something you really go To work in this business. It's still different when you graduate and
16]you do something really practical. It definitely reminds you the knowledge you had in lecture.
17]R: So, I'll pick up on what you were saying there. Because I asked as a business student rather
...
22]simpler version, but as a business student then, what did you get as far as putting all this
23]theory, knowledge, interview onto paper? did you learn about what business essays are like?
24]how they're organised so on?
25]Cheng: For me because, I studied politics and business, the differences for essay writing, for
26]Business it's very interesting, because you link to aspects. But if you write some other essays,
27]for example politics, it's very boring and theoretical. Whereas this one makes it more colourful.
28]It's not just paperwork.
29]Zhan: And for example, in my film essay we need reference to some theory and / but in the
30]business essay, we need connect more with practice rather than textbook.
31]Cheng: I think what he meant here it doesn't mean we don't need any more reference. We do
32]need to have references for this essay. Because of the real business, makes it slightly different.
33]R: Can I try another version of this question because I really want to get to the paper part,
34]although your answers are very helpful, thank you.
35 [TIME REFERENCE]
36]R: Is this sort of business writing / how would you characterise writing, then, about a business
37]topic? How is it / What kind of things are important to business students or to business
38]graduates because of what you wrote here In this very short essay? What do you think is
39]important to business studies or business students or even business graduates? What did you
40]get from this in that way? You did work on human resources, marketing, operations
41]management. What do you think you gained from this? Having to put all this all onto paper?
42]Does that make sense?
43]Cheng: I think it's very flexible in terms of writing up this essay. Because it really depends on
44]the case study you had. So there's no accurate answer for any of this HR, management,
45]marketing or operations management. It's very flexible. [GRP3|2 Lines 9-45]

Table 49 Genre, Group 3 (extract 34)

Cheng's last answer (Lines 42-45) was about her impression of the freedom that this task had. Since the answers to the task involved research, there was no "accurate answer." This line of questions revealed how Cheng views the creation of such a text, as a more creative process than other essays. Writing about the type of research, as Group 1 did, could be considered to be the creation of knowledge. It seems that Cheng has some understanding of this concept.

This was an unexpected answer. I had not expected that the participants would have such a perspective. Indeed, I was investigating the understanding of genre, in the sense of writing and structure, about which I did not obtain much information, from Group 2.

The next question presented is from Group 3 in interview 2 (extract 35- Table 50), about paraphrasing, about which there are two separate examples of paraphrasing. Due to the difference in the process, paraphrasing an interview is different from paraphrasing a source text.

The discussion about Group 3’s primary research (an interview with a business manager) included the way in which the data were transferred to their essay. I had understood, from previous questions, that the Group had recorded their notes on paper as their data gathering method for the interview. It is not clear what effect this had on the quality of the data gathering. Nevertheless, data were taken from the notes and presented on paper.

<p>113]R: Okay. Can you give me a hint about how you</p> <p>114]expressed the ideas that the person told you from the interviews. Can you give me perhaps</p> <p>115]an example sentence where you presented something that the person had told you. If you</p> <p>116]can read it for me. I’d be very interested to see. So you’ve taken the / you had the interview</p> <p>117]stuff, your notes and so on. How did it end up on paper? What did it look like when you tried</p> <p>118]to present the ideas of this business person? Can you give me an example from one of your</p> <p>119]sections? Maybe a sentence or two?</p> <p>120]Cheng: Because we obviously, here, we modified a few times from the original transcript for</p> <p>121]example, it says here “according to the manager of the restaurant it’s a small-scale restaurant</p> <p>122]which only contains 16 members. Three of them are Chinese and the rest of them are</p> <p>123]students from University X, from different countries.” In the interview, I remember he / we</p> <p>124]asked a question about how many “Member of staff you have here”. he was / as a very small</p> <p>125]business, the HR part is not as complicated the other big organisations. So, he simply said “we</p> <p>126]have only sixteen people here. Four of them are on floor, and 4 of them in the kitchen. They</p> <p>127]are consistent.” He also talked about why they have / He recruited some students because</p> <p>128]of the term time and the holiday. [GRP3I2 Lines 113-128]</p>
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Table 50 Paraphrasing interview data (extract 35)

I was interested to investigate the manner in which data were written about in their text. Cheng tried to recall what the manager had said (Lines 125-127), and the question they had asked (L.124). Prior to this, she had looked at the Group’s text and read the way in which it was written. She read it aloud (Lines 121-123). The manager was represented as “according to the manager of the restaurant.” This reference shows that the manager was presented by his job title. The essay shows how the Group added an explanation of the restaurant as “small scale” and writing “only” to the sentence. This shows the Group’s judgement of the business.

This discussion showed how Group 3 had taken an interview question, noted an answer, and then interpreted the words, adding some description. This showed one example of how the Group created a sentence from research data.

The issue of paraphrasing from sources was discussed with Group 3 (extract 36- Table 51). I referred (Lines 232-235) to a discussion that the Group had had in extract 9, where Cheng and Fu were examining Fu's paraphrasing. Cheng responded (L.239) by saying that the Group had not paraphrased most of it. She was, as a result, concerned about an accusation of plagiarism. At the time of this interview, the assessment had not been completed yet, and I therefore interrupted her to remind her that the Group were not to worry about me divulging any information.

231]R: I think I've got a couple of more simple questions. There was a concern I think in, again, 232]that, you had mentioned when chatting with Fu in particular where there was a concern 233]about how to paraphrase from the book. There was a section where you had asked him how 234]much of what you paraphrased was from the book and he said something like 30 or 50% and 235]then you asked him what sentences he changed. How did that process work out? I don't think 236]you finished discussing it here. Did you have to go back to the book? What did you do to sort 237]out that issue of whether it was paraphrased well? Just give me a rough idea. How did it 238]work out? 239]Cheng: I don't think we paraphrased most of it. We left, let's say, more than 50%. I hope it's 240]not considered to be plagiarism. It's also... [GRP312 Lines 231-240]

Table 51 Paraphrasing source text (extract 36)

This shows an understanding of the concept of plagiarism, and the role that paraphrasing can play in that. Cheng seems to recognise that references from source texts are necessary for an essay. This recollection of the conversation between Cheng and Fu does not seem to be in agreement with my understanding of their conversation in extract 9.

Cheng investigated Fu's work by asking him questions about his paraphrasing. It seemed that Cheng had investigated the ideas about the structure of sentences, as it relates to Fu's paraphrasing. She inquired about the percentages of paraphrasing. Fu had said that 30 to 50% of the finished text was directly from the source book (3/2/7-18). After that Cheng seemed to understand and accept his answer. Therefore, this interview segment showed a possible misunderstanding on my part, during the observation. I had thought that they were all satisfied, but Cheng implied that they were not.

This segment was important due to the way that the observation and the interview provided potentially conflicting information. This particular subject of paraphrasing, and the associated plagiarism issue, is an important indicator of the participants' understanding of the role of

sources of subject knowledge, and also how this subject knowledge is to be presented. This is important for both genre writing and general literacy.

This next segment discusses the issues arising from the tutor's feedback, which was the main subject of Interview 3. In this segment, because of the commonality of the themes, there are examples from both Group 2 and Group 3. A key theme in my study is how students view genre and literacy. As has been shown, the tutor played a role as teacher, assessor, consultant for questions, and local agent of the genre. This is why these discussions about the tutor's role are important for reflecting upon.

The first question I asked (extract 37- Table 52), as we met to discuss their tutor's feedback, was about the participants' consideration of the feedback. The first issue was about whether the groups had seen their feedback and how they approached it. Group 2 mentioned how the opportunity to read the feedback was a very short period of time, in class.

13]R: okay. Alright. So, I just / Since I've/ I just want to again thank you for coming. it's great to
14]see you. We're here with Hugo and Chanel working on the feedback from the business essay.
15]terrific. Can I just ask you have you individually or as a group, have you previously looked at
16]this feedback?
17]Hank: Ya
18]Cher: In a hurry
19]Hank: In the class
20]R: In a hurry. Okay. So did you have a chance to discuss any of it? Do you recall?
21]Hank (...)
22][audio 5:00]
23]Cher: No. He gave us at beginning of the class
24]Hank: then he took it back
25]Cher: took it back like in 3 minutes, so
26]R: So this is kind of almost a first good study? And a first discussion?
27]Hank: If it haven't needed it for this, we wouldn't see it again, so
28]R: I kind of understand.
29]Hank: [laugh]
30]R: I don't to make any assumptions. But I know that a lot of students are happy with the mark
31]and that's enough.
32]Cher: ya [GRP2I3 Lines 13-32]

Table 52 Feedback 1 (extract 37)

Cher (L.18, 25) and Hank (L.19) noted how the feedback session in class lasted for 3 minutes. That meant that there had been no time to discuss the feedback (Lines 23, 24). At the interview, I understood from their comments that they had also not looked at the feedback in any depth since then. The reason seemed to be that the mark was most important for some of the members (L.32).

A very similar answer was given by Cheng, from Group 3, to the reason why Group 3 was not concerned about the feedback (extract 38- Table 53). As Cheng (L.14) had noted, her group discovered the mark, which was what they expected from the feedback process. Cheng also voiced the opinion that the mark was satisfactory for her (L.15).

1]R: 11]you can see, as happened in this case, if I had not been here, chances are nobody would have 12]asked for the feedback. Am I correct in that? You probably wouldn't have asked for the 13]feedback? 14]Cheng: 'cause we know the mark, the grade. 14]R: You see? 15]Cheng: I think it's fine (...) [GRP3I3 Lines 1-15]
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Table 53 Feedback 2 (extract 38)

These brief segments raise two important issues. In the first instance, the feedback was allowed very little time in class, and therefore there was no literacy dialogue or negotiation. It was not clear what the reason had been for this. However, it seems that the participants had been satisfied with this situation. The reason appears to be that both groups 2 and 3 were interested in the mark, primarily.

This has implications for the presentation of the discussion that developed around the examination of the feedback that will follow. The participants had likely not studied the feedback in any depth. Therefore, any discussion they had with me would have been their first opportunity to interpret their feedback. Being that it occurred in my presence, this examination will be a common construction between the researcher and participants.

As part of my study, and my goal to understand what students believe about genre and literacy, it was important for examination of the participants' reflections. The primary reason is that the feedback represents the opinion and advice of their tutor about their writing. I believe that the tutor is the local agent of the genre for the classroom group, because of his place as the tutor and assessor.

The following section will examine individual instances in the interview where a comment from the tutor will be examined by the participants. These instances will be contextualised so that the feedback and the reaction can be understood better.

The discussions did involve all concerned studying the text and feedback. At certain times, the participants lacked an understanding of a feedback comment, or what it pertained to, or

how to rectify the error. With my experience of literacy work and their understanding of Business Studies, we tried together to create a greater understanding of some feedback comments. However, this is not a central facet of my study. Relevant information from those discussions will be briefly noted in the contextualisation.

The next feedback comment is from Group 2 (extract 39- Table 54), and it is about how to cite authors in a text. The comment in the text was interrogative. It implied that the tutor did not know whom the Group were referring to in the text, when they used the noun phrase “the author.” This showed a point of citation that the Group had not understood. Hank knew what the noun phrase had been used for: to refer to the author that was in the “previous paragraph.” However, it appears that the tutor noted that noun phrase as an unclear reference.

123]Hank: Also says like “the author” here. Like “Who?” I mean, like the one we were talking in 124]the previous paragraph, I mean. [GRP213 Lines 123-124]

Table 54 Feedback 3 (extract 39)

This is an example of how the Group was writing without knowing the aspect of literacy that corresponds to this feedback. This is an indication of how students write without having full awareness of the aspects of literacy that they needed.

The following example (extract 40- Table 55) is where the tutor commented that examples of an item had not been added by the participants in their text (L.148). Cheng had already understood the feedback because she realised that the fault was with her interview (Lines 151-152). The manager they interviewed had not provided the information that the tutor’s feedback comment referred to. This was an example of an issue of research technique, for the Group. This could have been a result of inexperience. That would indicate that the participants were not experienced enough in interviewing. There could be a structural tension in a task, if it was true that some students were not able to complete the task correctly due to inexperience.

148]R: "In HR H&S and equality legislation are mentioned..." And so "highlighting examples", so
 149]he's saying that you perhaps didn't use examples on how the restaurant does this. Does that
 150]make any sense?
 151]Cheng: yes. That's what I also aware. Because he in our interview we / the guy, he didn't talk
 152]that much about health and hygiene. He just in two sentences that he said "We do have this
 153]and we do have that". That's all. So, it's kind of he thinks it's routine or something boring that
 154]you don't have to know that much the procedure. So we actually knew it was not that much
 155]description for this part so we just put it in a few sentences. [GRP3I3 Lines 148-155]

Table 55 Feedback 4 (extract 40)

The following examples are points about a similar issue arising from the feedback for both groups. In these cases, the tutor made a comment about something that he claims the essay was missing. The response by the participants, in each case, was that there had been no room to do what the tutor had directed in the feedback comment.

I am not able to judge whether this is true. However, this could be a point of tension between the students and the tutor because the students did not believe that the tutor's advice could possibly be followed. As shown in previous extracts, these could have been solved through dialogue with the tutor.

86]Cher: "Not more than the material is used, except in legislation.
 87]Hank: I think he said that not any other material is used. Right?
 88]Cher: so, he's saying we are not putting anything/ everything
 89]Hank: "That made debating ideas difficult." so, like, that's our core book. You know?
 90]R: right
 91]Hank: So we have to be / We couldn't write much. Like, it was even hard to cover even with
 92]one book. So, like we didn't have space to add another book and from what he said,
 93][TIME REFERENCE]
 94]Hank: He made it pretty obvious that he didn't want any other sources. So, I'm kind of
 95]surprised to see that he wrote that. I don't know if you agree. Right?
 96]Cher: I think the textbook is the only source we can use.
 97]Hank: That's what we thought. So, I don't know. He could have said before the essay also
 98]"You're encouraged to bring different sources for "you know? We would have managed to do
 99]something. That's why we didn't use it.
 100]Cher: still the word limitation would not allow us to write more
 101]Hank: So, it doesn't make much sense to me. We didn't really have/ like, we had to just
 102]summarise pretty much everything. Like, I don't think it's good. But, I think It's not good
 103]because (...) the word limit to make something reasonable, you know. It's one page.
 [GRP2I3 Lines 86- 103]

Table 56 Feedback 5 (extract 41)

In the above example (extract 41- Table 56), both participants (Hank- L.91, Cher- L.100) state separately that they felt there was no room for them to do as the tutor had said. There

were three other such participant responses to feedback comments by Group 2 that were not listed here. This indicates that it would be an important issue for discussion.

A similar response came from Group 3, in one instance only (extract 42- Table 57). As the feedback comment noted (L.51), some information was missing. Cheng mentioned that they were going to provide this information (L.54), but the word limit would not allow it. Fan reiterated that (L.63), and added that they chose to exclude the relevant information because it was not as relevant as other information. This indicates that the group had, in their opinion perhaps, a structural tension inherent in their essay, namely the word limit. It caused them to resolve this tension by choosing to leave out less relevant information. This shows how tensions can be generators of solutions. However, the feedback shows that the solution was not appropriate. This creates another tension between the student and teacher, regarding the word limit.

<p>51]R: “No information provided on performance history” What does he mean by that? 52]Cheng: I guess it’s performance history. How the other branch performed in the last eight 53]years, as they have history. It’s not a new restaurant for the one in London High Street. 54]Actually, initially we had something related to their performance. They were profitable in 55]terms of business running or whatever. And we put in the introduction, but in the end we had 56]cut down because the word limit is too much so we decided only to keep very general 57]information here, so we put / Kept away performance history for the other restaurant. 58]R: Okay so he wasn’t talking about performance history of this restaurant here? 59]Cheng: but this one is the new one. So it couldn’t be any history. ‘cause it’s only 3 weeks. So 60]we could only talk about the old one for the first, for the introduction 61]R: interesting. But then you cut it? 62]Fan: Because we realised it’s / we are conducting this new restaurant, so shouldn’t talk too 63]much about the old one and also word limit. [GRP3I3 Lines 51-63]</p>
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Table 57 Feedback 6 (extract 42)

The final examples will be ones where the groups were unable to comprehend the feedback. As has been shown, this could be an indication of the practice of “mystery” regarding literacy (Lillis, 1999), if a student cannot understand a feedback comment. In Table 58 (extract 43), there are two brief examples, where Group 3 cannot interpret feedback. In the first example, Cheng stated that she was unaware of the meaning. In the second example, Cheng was unaware about a type of “debate” writing (L.87) that the tutor’s comment hinted at. As can be seen, these two feedback comments were intended, by the tutor, to inform this Group about an aspect of their writing, but it did not happen. The structural tension that could arise from

this is that the tutor expected that the students were capable of understanding this aspect of literacy, that the students were, at least consciously, unaware of.

1
72]R so, let's go on to the next one. Shall we? "Also mentioned in" what is that? "R"?
73]Cheng: yes. I didn't know what's this [GRP3I3 Lines 72-73]
-
2
76]R: so, somewhere in the introduction you mentioned the outline of your essay. so that seems
77]to be a good comment rather than a criticism. Great. So the literature review is next. And so, it
78]says/ wait a sec. Should we be taking a peak in the margins here on page one? So, there's that
79]approach and outline on page one. And the comments about the staff and performance
80]history as well. So, that's straightforward. Okay. And then we have a clear sheet on page 2. So,
81]the literature review. Let's look at the comments, then. "Relevant issue highlighted. However,
82]only definitions and brief discussions are mentioned rather than debating." I think we had this
83]conversation. Right?
84]Cheng: uhhm
85]R: Not only did you not have / I'm guessing you didn't have room. But there's something else
86]as well. About debating. Right?
87]Cheng: I didn't really aware of structuring a debate in this part / section. We were not. [GRP3I3
Lines 76-87]

Table 58 Feedback 7 (extract 43)

There was one example where Group 2 could not understand a feedback comment (extract 44- Table 59). The feedback (L.206) is reacted to by Hank. He presents a detailed explanation (Lines 207-210, 212-213) of his interpretation of the relevant information. He concludes by expressing the opinion that the tutor was "confused" (L.214). It seems that there is a difference of opinion between the tutor (as expressed in the feedback) and Hank, which could not be explained in the interview session.

206]R: "Maternity and paternity leave. Question mark"
207]Hank: No. no. It's not what they mean. I thought it was clear, but okay. Another type of
208]arrangement would be flex-time. In this case, parents of children aged 16 and under, or
209]disabled children aged under 18 have the flexibility to start later than most or leave earlier to
210]attend to their children's needs. That's not paternity or maternity leave.
211]R: right.
212]Hank: that's like a flexible (..) that the company offers for people who have children , so they
213]can leave a little bit earlier or come a little bit later. I mean, I don't know why he got
214]confused. Because paternity is when you give birth, and you stay for a while. Isn't it? [GRP2I3
Lines 206-214]

Table 59 Feedback 8 (extract 44)

This section showed the development of some new understandings about what the tutor required of the writing of the classroom group. It is not certain whether this was an issue of genre or general academic literacy. Amongst the participants, there is not enough knowledge

about these issues. However, some participants could explain the genre that they wrote in, as being closely related to the task instructions.

There remains evidence of structural tensions for these participants as they attempted to appropriate literacy. A lack of communication equals a continuation of tension on the road to literacy. This lack of communication can be caused by feedback that is not understood, or by students who do not study feedback. The discussions described above would not have happened were it not for the interviews, and my participation. This is why the findings from the interviews, as far as my study are concerned, are tentative, as regards the participants' paths towards academic literacy and/or genre literacy.

This section was important because it did indicate some of the issues that were of importance to the participants in their literacy processes. This has helped develop a greater understanding of these issues which have arisen through the interview process, and there have been some connections made with the observation data, thereby lending some credence to the observation analysis.

The next chapter will look to collate the themes raised by the data analysis in this chapter to develop a more holistic understanding of the literacy work that was witnessed.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

This chapter will review and interpret the key themes arising from the examination of the research data. The structure that this analysis will follow is that which was presented at the beginning of Chapter 4 (and Table 11). This will be followed by a comparison with previous research, and the implications arising from this research.

5.1 Introduction

An assessment task is presented to students and this sets into motion a long, complex process for students, and the tutor. The task itself has structural tensions that create difficulty for students. Those tensions reside in the task (e.g. instructions), the process (e.g. group dynamics) and the literacy awareness that it requires of students. That literacy, as a standard, is often a mystery to students.

The central focus of the following section is to explain the types of tension that were found, as themes, and the way that the participants attempted to resolve them. This will take the subject of tension out of the individual extracts and show tensions to be the main driver of resolutions, as well as the cause of frustration.

Secondly, the following section will examine the mediational tools that the participants put to use to resolve their problems. These are typically language tools. This part of the section will show how participants, through the task, were dealing with literacy, in the broadest sense. A personal perception of literacy, or genre, is the underlying tool that students employ to answer tasks, and to present subject knowledge in a manner befitting the disciplinary representative's preferences.

In so doing, the participants witnessed structural tensions throughout their literacy work due to the task, language issues, or group dynamics. Therefore, as they progressed, they were asking themselves about the meaning of genre and literacy in the process of dealing with most problems. They used what awareness of literacy or genre that they had that was relevant, but there often existed uncertainty about whether that was correct.

That type of uncertainty can be resolved by a group, through negotiation, such that they can agree on their solution. However, the final arbiter as to correctness is the tutor. The advice that the tutor provided could have assisted in the reduction of some tensions within the task, the

writing process, and the genre and student literacy appropriation. Tutor advice was sought during the task process, but the summative feedback could only provide advice for future writing tasks.

The next section will present an analysis reflecting the types of structural tension, by category. In doing so, there will be a presentation of brief reviews of the data, the tensions arising the degree of resolution and opportunities for literacy appropriation.

5.2 Types of tension and resolution process

Assessment tasks can be viewed as assessment cycles which include the summative feedback. The whole process is seen as an example of literacy work. They provide, amongst all activities, for a number of challenges for students that could be seen as task-derived tensions. In other words, they would not have occurred had the task not been set. Some of these tensions could have provided opportunities for literacy appropriation because students seemed to grapple with their awareness of language and other relevant factors (drawn from the activity system).

There were found situations where the students experienced difficulty, and struggled to meet that challenge. This section will use indicative examples, cross-referencing observation and interview data, to analyse tensions and whether they had been overcome to the group's satisfaction, or to the tutor's satisfaction, as best as could be perceived from the ethnographic data. A last issue will be whether the students' processes allowed for the possibility of literacy appropriation.

This first section will show some of the key tendencies in literacy work, especially those which show the structural tension that seemed inherent in much of the ExT. In other words, the ExT may have been an indication of the aspects of literacy that the groups were uncertain about. It could be that the underlying literacy uncertainty (raised by the task) was the driving force behind much of their negotiation. These groups were discussing aspects of their task, but what I saw as a common thread was the unspoken question "what is literacy?", or "what is the genre?" This is what students seemed to be asking when they were uncertain about what to write.

The main category of structural tension, textual work, was categorised as either genre, lexicogrammatical or rhetorical work (which is related to subject content). Any given extract, while

categorised into one of the textual work or subject content labels, often included work that involved more than one such category.

The first example from textual work (rhetorical) is the issue of objectivity in writing. In their editing work, Group 2 discovered a length of text that they sought to correct by using hedging to make the statement appear less certain. In so doing, they had a chance to discuss their data (subject content), and negotiate using their awareness of hedging, to find an appropriate phrase to replace the existing one. This extract indicated that some members had some awareness of objectivity and its importance to their essay. The group appeared to resolve this issue, and it was likely that members experienced an opportunity for literacy appropriation.

Paraphrasing (rhetorical & subject content) is an important way for students of including source material from a text in an essay and it is associated with the rule regarding plagiarism. Cheng and Fan had a lengthy discussion (extract 8), and this event was expanded on in an interview (extract 35). The group investigated Fan's paraphrasing process as a theoretical discussion rather than one about the actual words in their text. This issue provided an opportunity for resolution and could have been an opportunity for literacy appropriation.

The creation of a collaborative text can include the construction of sentences (lexico-grammatical). In extract 11, the group used their awareness of the subject content to begin writing a sentence together, word by word, through negotiation. The negotiation showed how different words were offered and considered. This variety of language could have been because of a multitude of options available, or because the group was struggling to find an acceptable phrase.

Sentence-level work was seen to be a process where the participants used a particular type of negotiation that was described as micro-Exploratory talk. It had qualities that, put together, indicated that it was a new type of ET. This type of negotiation brought about a resolution of the issue and could have provided an opportunity for literacy appropriation.

The participants' essay was a task which required primary research (textual work-extract 40). The groups that were interviewed seemed to have had problems interviewing companies. They did not seem to have been trained in research interviewing and their foundation course did not have research interview training. Group 3 spoke of their problems. They claimed that the group's questions had not been answered by the business person because the group could not control the conversation well enough.

This shows a structural tension in the task. The groups were given a task of interviewing when they did not have any training. This could have had implications for their task. Indeed, this issue was reflected in the tutor's summative feedback. The feedback, which they had not read fully, had been designed to highlight this deficiency. This indicated that the tutor thought of this as a problem for which the students were responsible.

The possible benefit for their literacy appropriation could have arisen from understanding more about the importance of primary research and the methods for obtaining data. My research, though not part of the group's normal processes, was one opportunity to study the issue. Nevertheless, the issue remained unresolved as regards that psychological tool.

A key issue in textual work was whether the participants were aware (of the name or characteristics) of the genre of writing that they were expected to produce. This issue had been noticed in observation data, and was pursued in the interview process. There were some indications from Vana that she recognised aspects of the essay as being similar to some Business Studies genres, namely reports and case studies. That refers to the overall structure or the communicative purpose of the essay. Indeed, it was common in Business Studies for students to interview real-world sources as a method of reporting data, or of applying theoretical Business Studies content, of which the groups were aware (extracts 10,14 and 20). The text, as judged by purpose and content, seems to have been a text type from Business Studies coursework assessment (Gardner & Nesi, 2013).

Within Group 2, there was some metalinguistic awareness of the content of their essay. They were aware of the lack of argument (extract 31) in their paper, as in the proving of a controversial point through the presentation of evidence. They also understood how their work was about describing what a company does, in the manner of the report genre.

It remains unclear what, if any of the other qualities of the writing that they did was reminiscent of a genre, like that of Business Studies. It could be that their writing was indicative of their general academic literacy. This would include aspects of grammar and discourse which have been described in this study, such as objectivity, paraphrasing, introductory paragraphs. These could also be a part of Business Studies writing. Therefore, it appears that the groups, particularly Group 2, were writing with some awareness of a Business Studies genre, and some awareness of general academic literacy.

The context of the literacy work was indicative of other contributing factors that had an influence upon the participants' work. That included the classroom group, with the most important member being the tutor.

The classroom group is a community, in some senses. The tutor can have a role in the literacy appropriation processes of students by participating in the process. That means discussing literacy, or answering questions, or offering advice. The tutor's contribution was seen in the discussions of his classroom advice, his answering of questions, and his written feedback.

The most common identifiable source of tension was the task, as represented by the task document (classified as contextual- see Table 11). This document needed to be interpreted so that the participants could write an appropriate text. In these cases, the groups were engaged in discussions amongst themselves to try to interpret the instructions. This encouraged the group to examine each other's awareness or experience with the type of task, or the language of the task. In extract 15, it was shown how the task instructions had created confusion because of the interpretation given to it by the participants. This also occurred in extracts 20 and 21.

In these cases, the participants could not resolve the misunderstanding by themselves. The cause of their inability could have been inexperience with the type of task, or an issue of not having sufficient language awareness to interpret the instruction. The last possible explanation is that the tutor's instructions may have been unclear.

In cases 15 and 21, the solution was to include the group approaching the tutor with questions. This choice was described in the interview analysis (extracts 29, 30). Therefore, the resolution of this tension tended to come from a consultation with the tutor. This was an opportunity for literacy dialogue. In other extracts, the task led to tensions for which the tutor was not consulted. In those cases, the students reached an agreement based on their own negotiation (e.g. extract 20).

These examples indicate that there was a structural tension in the task instructions, for those groups at those points in their processes. This has implications for a classroom if the students, arranged in groups, using the tools at their disposal through negotiation, cannot understand a part of a task. The classroom group could be the source of a solution if the tutor is available for consultation. Otherwise, students need to rely on their group to resolve tensions.

The task, which was mentioned above as a common point of contextual tension, was closely associated with the tutor by the participants. When students had a question about the task, they

were noted as saying that they went to the tutor (extracts 15 and 17), to resolve a structural tension that existed between the group and tutor. In extracts 16 and 24, Group 2 disagreed with the tutor on the topic of some of the rules, or task requirements (contextual issue), sometimes expressed as opposition to the tutor, which affected the writing of their text. This structural tension existed because the students were not aware of the reasons behind the way the task forced them to write in a particular manner, be it genre writing (textual work issue), or some other reason.

Certain members of the group believed that they had a better way of structuring their text. It is not clear who was correct in this respect, or who was expressing the genre more correctly. However, it is the tutor who would be cognisant of the genre, or the version of the genre that he expected of students. As the group spoke to the tutor (extract 28), the group discovered that the tutor was not willing to change the style “rule” in question. Even though there was a discussion with the tutor, there was no discussion about the genre or the reasons for the task instruction. The participants resolved to follow the tutor’s instruction. In that way, they learned about literacy norms.

However, the genre remained a mystery. In such cases, a tutor could engage the students in a literacy dialogue on an issue, as happened other times (above). Such a discussion could also give students a chance to present their experience and awareness, and perhaps learn about genre in return. As it stands, the tension underlying this issue of genre remained unresolved.

The most typified way that a tutor offers a form of literacy teaching to students is through summative assessment feedback. That is an aspect of the theory of feedback as literacy teaching, if not the practice (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). This is why the feedback, though not perceived as part of the essay cycle in this case, by the groups interviewed, was still included in my study for the purpose of encouraging reflection. The first thing this showed was that the summative written feedback revealed structural tensions about the genre remained after the completion of the task, whether the students had been aware of them or not.

It was shown in the interviews (extracts 37-44) how the tutor’s feedback could have been interpreted by the participants and therefore aid in literacy appropriation, and the lessening of the tension about the various aspects that participants were struggling to do in their task processes. In trying to understand something about the feedback processes of the groups in this study, I noticed some unexpected things. In the first instance, the tutor gave the groups’ feedback forms in the classroom group, but only allowed 3 minutes for the class to examine

the feedback. As mentioned, there was little opportunity for anyone to expand their understanding of disciplinary literacy at that time.

The participants also showed (in the interviews) how they, in turn, were not interested in the feedback, while being interested in the mark. Though the reason was not revealed, there appeared to be no longer any interest amongst the participants in expanding their understanding of disciplinary literacy from that essay. This can be summarised as a missed opportunity for literacy dialogue between students and the local agent of the genre, their tutor at the summative stage. This was particularly important at certain points (extracts 41-44) where it was evident that the participants could not understand what the tutor's feedback meant, or how they could have met the tutor's standards.

In trying to investigate the feedback with the participants, I believe that I saw some understanding of certain items of feedback. Those could have been opportunities for improving understanding. I also noticed some points where the students disagreed with the tutor. In other examples, the participants could not understand a feedback comment. That was an opportunity at communication that was lost, for many reasons, chiefly because the feedback needed to be explained by the tutor. These two points showed how opportunities to reduce the tension of the students' constant concern about what literacy and genre are, were lost. This appears to be an issue of the lack of sufficient communication regarding literacy, though there was the indication that instrumentalist motivation might cause students to be interested in the mark only.

The creation of an essay is a long, complex process. In some ways, group dynamics (an activity system subject issue) were a cause of tensions of various kinds. Some of these issues involved cooperation amongst the participants. The first example, from extracts 2 and 3, was noteworthy because of the way that a group dealt with strong differences of opinion. It was seen that the group was not successful at negotiating because they could not resolve the problem of their planning process satisfactorily. The strain of a failed negotiation was a structural tension for the group.

The causes of this failure, as seen in the interview data (extract 22), were ones about which the group was aware. Two of the members asserted that the members' strong opinions had been a problem for their work. This was an issue that affected the group's ability to exchange ideas and to benefit from cooperation. This issue was exacerbated by, as members of the group had said, the issue of their use of language, and particularly the language of negotiation (i.e.

psychological tool). This was the language through which they used to attempt to reach a resolution. They were all L2-English speakers, and members claimed (extract 27) that this likely had an effect on the group members not being able to resolve some issues. Therefore, this issue was not seen as having been resolved. Nevertheless, the group completed their essay task.

This problem was of a personal nature, and not one for which the classroom group or the tutor were responsible. Experiments have shown that training in negotiation has been shown to work with children (Mercer, 1995). However, this may not be a common part of Business Studies education.

The groups had been formed for reasons of compatibility and friendship, mostly, according to Questionnaire 2. The combinations were not made based on the closeness in the students' levels of literacy or their closeness in their awareness of spoken English (an activity system issue). As a result some groups had issues with the large variance in abilities amongst the members. That could have been based on experience of the task type, literacy level or level of English. This was observed in extracts 23 and 25, from Group 3.

The difference in performance levels meant that there was a structural tension within some groups. If the members' levels of English or literacy were different, then the impression was that much of the responsibility for the writing process fell on the "best" member. This is how extract 23 was interpreted. In that case, it seemed as if Cheng was teaching Zhan, in a long monologue. It is unclear whether this led to literacy appropriation for Zhan, but there was evidence that this discussion led to satisfactory resolution of the issue. This was a personal issue, in the process of task completion, because the group members had chosen one another, and not an issue.

One of the benefits of variances in ability is the potential for self-reflection (an activity system subject issue) for two groups. In extracts 25 and 26, one member of the group presented an ad hoc self-assessment. This assessment was about specific or general abilities in literacy. This structural tension could have arisen from taking part in an activity for which a person found himself or herself unprepared, linguistically or as regards disciplinary literacy.

The discussion raised issues of ability, and group support. In this way, there may have been an opportunity for the members in question, or the group, to appropriate literacy. It is not clear whether the members who went through the self-assessment (in conversation with others) were

then motivated to improve in some way. In this way, there was no clear resolution as to the issues raised.

To summarise, the examples above show how the tensions in the literacy activity caused the group to search for answers together, through (ExT) negotiation, or collaborative dialogue. The participants used their awareness of literacy to build a common understanding that would lead to a commonly-accepted solution to resolve a point of tension. This was a solution that would often have an effect on their essay text. There are three reasons why these examples of collaborative dialogue were not referred to as learning.

Firstly, as has been mentioned, the apprehension of learning, or appropriation, is epistemologically difficult. In AT the concepts of knowledge or learning are not favoured because of their underlying connotations of consciousness and the nature of awareness (Lave, 1999). Nevertheless, it may be possible to ascribe a kind of appropriation to certain evidence of literacy use. The use of metalanguage is one such example of the seeming awareness of a descriptor of text (e.g. argument) and the ability to use it even in abstract discussions, in activity, or an interview, can hint at that person's awareness. There were examples of this in many extracts (e.g. 10,13,16). In some extracts, it was evident that the literacy point had been appropriated in another of their program courses (e.g. extract 19) (Prior, 1998).

Secondly, the method of data analysis that was used to reveal the participants' ExT in their literacy task provided an indication of events that may have had the potential to further the literacy appropriation of one or more of the participants. The examples of ExT showed how participants asked questions, offered answers and explanations, negotiated and compromised with amongst themselves.

The processes themselves, because they presented the opportunity to balance competing opinions, may have caused a participant to create new conceptions of literacy items, without showing outward signs. At times, their processes led participants to seek an answer from the tutor. Being that the tutor was likely seen as a genre arbiter, the tutor's answers may have been retained as items of literacy appropriated. However, in the extracts where new understandings were evident (e.g. extracts 1,10,20), or a decision about writing made (e.g. extracts 6,11,12,15), these could have been instances of appropriation.

Thirdly, while the group was looking for solutions in the short-term, because of time constraints attached to the task, it is not clear whether what they agreed upon was an acceptable solution, or which was acceptable as disciplinary literacy. The tutor would be the judge of that,

as part of their community, the classroom group. That issue will be discussed below. The uncertainty, or tension, arising most often from the task directly or indirectly, was a driver of activity.

5.3 Comparison with previous research

This review will examine the existing theories on ET and tertiary literacy. It will show how this study compares with their findings and how my study may add to the existing knowledge about tertiary literacy processes and the methods of studying tertiary literacy processes. The “sociocultural” framework, based on Vygotskian and Bakhtinian theories, called ET, and its associated methodological framework (SDA) are being used to study social learning and educational dialogue. My study modified these for the purposes of my research, but not before examining the data.

The framework of ET (Mercer, 1995, Mercer & Littleton, 2007) was examined through the analysis of the observation data. The dynamics of collaborative educational dialogue was a fundamental component of the epistemological position of this thesis. I believed that the dialogue in tertiary literacy work would provide a new perspective on group literacy processes as a study of contextualised change in action. The patterns of negotiation showed how understandings and decisions were potential sites of literacy appropriation. In an iterative process, the Mercerian ET categories were compared with the inductive analysis to discover if there was any compatibility. It was expected that there would be compatibility to some degree, as was found.

The findings show that the ET categories were compatible as to the psychological-tool data that they covered. It was necessary however to proceed with an inductive micro-analysis of the categories of ExT, Disputational talk and Cumulative talk to discover what if anything new could be discovered. The novel categories that were found, and were listed alongside existing categories in Table 12. There were also elements of the description of the ET categories that were added (see 4.4). These additions could have been the result of the fact that the activity studied was tertiary disciplinary education task. The activity involved literacy work which had not been studied in this manner, and may also have played a role in the tentative additions to ET.

A new tentative category of ET was discovered from the data. This may have been a function of the fact that the activity was literacy work. The micro-Exploratory talk was found to be unique, and arose from the extracts where a group was focused on the creation of sentences. This category, found in 4.6.8 and elsewhere was an unexpected addition to the analytical framework.

In applying this methodology, I had expected the participants in this study to negotiate to some degree, but I had little or no reference point to decide how much negotiation would occur and whether participants would talk, or talk while being observed. I was pleased to see that I delineated 108 extracts, most of which were ExT talk meaning that indicated that the participants were earnestly engaged in their writing, and perhaps were largely unaffected by my presence.

In analysing the data, I tried to create extracts with reasonably clearly-defined beginnings and endings, and also the ability to indicate understanding as part of the process. As I also discovered the need to do a micro analysis, I had to examine whether there was enough orderliness within extracts to describe a structure that was at least partially representative of the construction process the participants were engaged in.

Mercer (1995) had been vague about delineating extracts, preferring to focus on the collaborative dialogue. However, it was implied from his and his colleagues work (Maybin, Edwards & Mercer, 1988) that they had also conducted an inductive micro-analysis of extracts before settling on the holistic analysis that is Mercerian ET. I thought that since I was looking at tertiary education, I should also conduct a micro-analysis, with the knowledge that it was not to reify moves out of context. This is so because the extracts have the characteristic of a construction that has meaning within its process, to the participants, at that time. Nevertheless, the micro-analysis, couched in this way, aided in the understanding of the processes within an extract, and how the exchanges within an extract tended to build on each other.

As there has been little AT research on educational dialogue, I have little to use for comparison. However, through AT, I found that the important factors in tertiary literacy work were more than just the dialogue. As I began to examine the data, other issues arose that meant that I needed to expand the analysis to include AT concepts. This is how I created a putative AT discourse analysis method that can be seen throughout the thesis, the categories of which are described in the group activity system and the data categories (Tables 3 and 11). Through

this I was able to consider more pertinent factors and examine the tensions (Engeström, 1987) that were particular to the literacy work of these tertiary students.

The expansion to include more mediational tools showed the wide variety of tools used by tertiary students. It is evident that mediational tools, both physical and particularly psychological ones, have great importance in tertiary literacy work. The inclusion of context, meant that the tutor could be included as a factor, as was reflected in the data.

From the analysis, I found other trends interesting. It was also unexpected to see how much the tutor's actions played a role in discussions. The role of the tutor was very complex. Each of the groups had opportunities to discuss the tutor's lessons and advice. Some groups sought the tutor as a resolution for tension coming from the difficulty of the task. I also did not expect that students would be willing to challenge the tutor's rules, as expressed in the task.

This is how it came to be that the task dialectic took shape, and the structural tensions inherent in tertiary literacy work revealed themselves. I believed such tensions to exist from my work aiding student literacy. However, it was important to examine whether these were somewhat tangible, which they were.

Within this same dynamic, I was somewhat expecting that the feedback would be a complex issue. It was noticed that tutor advice (a type of formative feedback) during the task, was seen to be beneficial (Nicol & Macfarlane Dick, 2006), in most cases. The same could not be said for summative feedback. While most participants were seen looking to the tutor during the creation of their text, as the task became an assessment tool, their interest in the tutor's feedback waned and was replaced by a need for validation through the assessment mark.

This importance of context, particularly the role of the tutor and the task dialectic are places where I also differed from Tardy (2006, 2009). Tardy had researched literacy work in an ethnographic fashion, but did not observe much text creation. It may be because of this that the issue of the tutor and the task had not registered in her findings. However, from watching literacy activity, I could recognise that the task had great importance given to it by the students. Indeed, the structural tensions in the task comprehension work was an important driver in the process, for every group.

As Tardy (2006, 2009) categorised literacy knowledge, she recognised that the categories were only descriptive and perhaps not reflective of real activity. Though her categories and sub-categories of literacy work were appropriate, I can make a tentative statement that Tardy's

categories did artificially separate events into separate categories. From analysing extracts, I could show that text and subject content were often discussed together (e.g. extract 15). This has implications for the appropriation of literacy. Disciplinary literacy is so because it is part of a type of community that has common goals and tools. It is therefore difficult to separate the literacy work from the expression of subject content.

Li (2013) had shown how literacy groups can have problems working together. I can tentatively state that this can happen. My study also attempted to discover the reasons behind the examples in my study. The individual opinions of members was central, as some participants had stated. However, participants also made a point of stating that language itself can be an issue for a group of L2-English students, and it may have contributed to their not being able to successfully negotiate a solution, on occasion.

The study showed how the power relationship was reflected in the literacy work of a group (Lea & Street, 1998). The tutor was shown to be helpful, but not always forthcoming with the required assistance or dialogue for explaining disciplinary literacy to students. Certain aspects of the tutor's role were indeed indicative of the practice of mystery (Lillis, 1999), such as the summative feedback process, including some individual feedback advice and the reason for the text structure.

I support the concept from Donato (1994) about group scaffolding. The data shows that there was genuine effort at working together for the good of a group. However, it was difficult to ascertain whether any one aspect of their group work was successful, according to the standards of the genre, or at least not incorrect. I found it more important to investigate how the dialogue could be classified as productive. It was important to see the way in which the students engaged with the ideas and how they strove to improve their essays.

5.4 Implications

There are implications that might arise from this analysis. Those can be summarised as being about the place of literacy in disciplinary learning, about the role of dialogue and community in the classroom, and about literacy research methods.

Larson & Marsh (2005) have collated social constructivist concepts of the unification of theory and practice in literacy education. Their work is mostly with primary and secondary students. However, many of the messages resonate with university. Firstly, it would be helpful

for literacy research to be conducted on a small scale in departments that are interested in improving literacy processes amongst students. In this way, literacy talk, as in my study, is a resource that can aid the departments in understanding how students learn and what tensions exist in their work. This would be important if tertiary pedagogues were interested in understanding or improving students' literacy appropriation processes.

There were many aspects of the task dialectic (Engeström, 1987) and group literacy processes that showed structural tensions. These may be a normal part of tertiary literacy work, or viewed as such, and part of what makes tutors set an assessment as a challenge to students. However, I believe that my study indicated some differences between a tension (as a challenge) that engages students' best efforts, which can aid literacy appropriation, and too-great a challenge that frustrates students. This frustration can occur if students are being asked to pursue activities for which they have not been trained, and of which they have no experience.

This view of the task dialectic can lead to many types of research. Firstly, literacy processes could be studied more, in a given classroom group, as a way for tutors and disciplines to better grasp the pedagogical implications of their assessment processes, particularly as regards literacy appropriation. Therefore, there could be more disciplinary study on goal-directed literacy processes, including the language of literacy negotiation. This could be most fruitfully done with marginal students (amongst L2-English and WP) as they may be most prone to frustration with university culture (see Lillis, 1999, 2001).

Secondly, since dialogue amongst students, and between tutor and students, has been shown to be important to correcting tensions that arise in literacy work, research could look at feedback anew. Feedback comprehension has been studied in many different ways (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). However, as my study showed, perhaps there is more to the literacy process than simply understanding feedback. My study showed how literacy advice of many kinds can be included in literacy work processes. It is within these processes that the effect of tutor advice (like feedback) can be examined for its effect on literacy appropriation. This could mean its effect on the task and even issues of affect (Poulos & Mahoney, 2008).

Thirdly, in the interest of studying literacy appropriation processes, the nature of the tutor's expertise could be further studied. If the appropriation of a disciplinary genre is dependent upon a number of local agents of the genre (i.e. tutors- in lieu of a centralised literacy program), there needs to be a greater understanding of tutors' tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1962) and what effect that can have on students' processes in situ. This could be done in many different ways.

Feedback has within it interconnected disciplinary, epistemological, pedagogic and genre messages. However, it is different in form from a tutor's dialogue. Therefore, a tutor's literacy dialogue (factoring in the written feedback) could be included in a (semi-experimental) observation study. Alternatively, the tutor could work together with a literacy researcher to analyse data arising from students' literacy work. These types of studies would help to increase understanding of the nature of tutors' tacit awareness of disciplinary literacy, and the role that tacit genre awareness could have in such environments where literacy is taught indirectly, if at all.

Fourthly, there was also some indication that written summative feedback was not considered part of the dialogue process of "formative" feedback, in the classroom group I studied. That perspective seemed to be representative of both the students' and the tutor's perspectives. The reasons for this seemed to be complex, and would require ethnographic study to divulge. However, perhaps summative feedback could be a part of the scaffolded, formative, long-term disciplinary literacy process for students (by tutors) that ought to exist, if disciplines are indeed communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Semi-experimental research of this kind could best be conducted through long-term research on students (and classroom groups) going through many essay task cycles. This would use literacy processes to test feedforward (Hattie & Timperley's, 2007).

There is the call to end the belief in autonomous literacy (Larson & Marsh, 2005). I would add to this the concepts of self-regulated learning which also assumes that learning is individual. This study seems to show a multitude of benefits for students of engaging in rich dialogue about literacy and subject content through goal-directed activity. I believe that this perspective on tertiary education may encourage more study of the use of opportunities for group literacy work, particularly at the undergraduate level, where students are developing their study skills.

I believe that my study has contributed a new way of looking at tertiary literacy as a process of writing, in context. It showed how this process was constructed of a series of tensions, most of which were resolved satisfactorily through negotiation. Further research could also be conducted to ascertain whether the AT contextualised discourse analysis system used in my study can provide useable data for disciplinary research on literacy or other issues, particularly at Level 4 (Tertiary undergraduate level) and Level 7 (Tertiary post-graduate level) (QAA, 2008) which have far larger cohorts. This particular study followed L2-English students in a

Foundation program disciplinary course. These students had particular attributes that played a role in the dialogues and work they created that might be different from those at Level 4 or 7. However, longer-term research is needed to discover whether observation is a better, comparable or complimentary type of pedagogical research method.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

The pursuit of the understanding of literacy processes is a difficult challenge. However, this study approached that task from a particular perspective, through a research question and methodology. The question asked:

How do the qualities of tertiary literacy group work aid our understanding of the factors which affect the negotiation of disciplinary genre literacy?

The tertiary literacy group work that was presented was that of 3 groups of three students from a Level-6 course in Business Studies discipline. I was able to observe parts of the process for one of their tasks, out of the many that they have. Many of the group literacy work were captured and studied to understand better the qualities of this disciplinary literacy work.

It was shown how their work was studied in regards to their negotiation, the typology of that work, the structures and construction of the activities, and the way that this led to writing. I was able, through this, to indicate how ExT talk led to some new common understanding.

The literacy work that they produced was also examined. The typology of literacy topics was inductively constructed, so as to apprehend the literacy awareness that was used to resolve tensions.

In studying the dynamics of the activities, it was shown how the task was a major driver behind the activities. Its instructions were designed for students to use in the construction of text. However, inherent in the activity were some structural tensions. I showed how inexperience amongst the participants with the type of text meant that students struggled to work with some instructions.

The tutor is closely related to the task. Therefore, it was seen how the tutor played a role in the activities as a source of information about the task and the genre. The tutor was consulted to answer questions. At other points, the tutor was recalled as a source of other advice. There were also other literacy sources whose ideas were referred to. The tutor also provided feedback for students which was part of the task cycle for the classroom group.

In processing some of the instructions, some students again found that the confluence of the task and their literacy skills created more structural tensions. In activities, students were found to struggle at times with finding an answer which the group could accept. The differences of opinion, and the uncertainty showed that students were striving to overcome their difficulties.

As they worked together, it was shown how another source of tension could be the group itself. Some of these problems affected their literacy work. For example, there were imbalances amongst the students in terms of their level of ability. Tension also arose from the inability to negotiate and to be understood.

In trying to understand the nature of the language used, there was some understanding gained about the typology of the written discourse the participants were using. It was not fully clear whether the literacy that they perceived was that of Business Studies or general academic literacy, at the level of discourse, though there were signs of understanding of some functional aspects of the genre in which they had written. There was also some indication of the participants' understanding of the text structure, how it was related to Business Studies and about related text forms.

As a process, this study showed how the tensions above arose, were recognised and were dealt with as witnessed in the extracts. A tension or tensions often started the activities and while other tensions could arise, the groups typically proceeded to resolve tensions with orderliness, degree through their negotiations.

The attempts at resolving tensions was the most likely generator of the literacy awareness that the groups produced. In trying to solve problems, the groups presented the language that they thought to be relevant to the discussion. This language often showed the effect of the experiences that these participants had had in previous literacy activities.

As this was a complex study, it could be said that the parameters of this study showed that a temporary literacy group can be represented by an activity system as one network of activity. I showed how a task, arising from a classroom group, brought together three partners who in their attempt to resolve the structural tensions in the task, used mediational tools that represented the aspects of literacy that they found most relevant, working through the tensions in their group and their literacy skills, to take their awareness of their subject content and mould it into an essay through productive negotiation.

In summary, in answering all the facets of the question, I examined the qualities of group literacy work. That included the negotiation patterns and the representation of literacy items. In studying how those worked together, I presented an analysis of the task dialectic and the tensions which affected the activities. By showing the context to be a factor, I also showed how the literacy work was couched in a classroom system with communication between tutor and students on issues of literacy. This shows how literacy activity is a generator of change.

The data in this study was specific to the individual cases from which they were derived. However, I believe that this study has revealed some aspects of literacy work that could apply more generally to tertiary students.

As an academic literacy tutor, I believe that this study allowed me to systematise my analysis of student work on literacy, recognising the importance of certain factors to the students. I believe that because of this study, I feel more confident in diagnosing the viability of collaboration in the act of writing. I am ever more convinced that group work is vital for students to progress faster in their pursuit of literacy and higher learning.

APPENDIX 1 FOUNDATION PROGRAM HANDBOOK

Modules

English Language and Study Skills

Aims

The module aims to familiarize students with the English language requirements of masters level study in Social Sciences and Humanities; to provide practice in academic written and spoken discourse; and to help them acquire the cognitive skills necessary to succeed on a taught masters programme.

Outline

This module will provide students with an understanding of UK academic culture, and help them develop

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- demonstrate the English language ability and study skills required for entry to and potential success in a masters degree programme in one of the following disciplines: Business and Management, Economics and Finance, Politics and International Relations, and Languages,

Structure

English Language and Study Skills consists of lessons in the following areas:

Academic Reading & Writing	6 hours per week	Semester 1
	4 hours per week	Semester 2
Reading in the Disciplines*	2 hours per week	Semester 1

Business Studies

Module aims

The module aims to provide students with an overview of the key topics and issues in the study of Business and Management with a particular emphasis on organisational behaviour so as to enable

Module outline

The module examines the political, economic and legal context in which business operates, people and

Learning outcomes

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the political, economic and legal context in which business

Structure

Lecture	2 hours per week	Semesters 1 & 2
Seminar	1 hour per week	Semesters 1 & 2

Plagiarism and Cheating

Plagiarism

All work you produce for assessment, whether as coursework or in an examination must be your own unaided work.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the failure to reference the writings or ideas of another person that you have used in your own work. Whether you do this by mistake or intentionally, you

You must never ask someone else to write an essay for you or submit an essay downloaded from the Internet. This is also plagiarism.

What are the penalties for plagiarism in assessed coursework?

Where allegations of plagiarism arise for items of coursework, the Head of

For items of assessment worth 30 per cent or less of the total module mark, penalties

APPENDIX 2 QUESTIONNAIRES

1 RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE for the Literacy study-

INTRODUCTION

This survey was designed to aid in the choosing of participants for the Literacy study you have just heard about. Please answer each question, if you can. Extra comments are optional.

PERSONAL DETAILS

Gender: Female:___ Male:___ [**mark X**]

LINGUISTIC ISSUES

1 How many languages do you speak? ___ Which language(s)?

2 In how many languages can you write an essay?___ Which languages?

3 Do you consider English to be your first language? no ___yes___

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

4 What is the history of attending university in your family? [circle one]

- a) I'm the first one in the family to go to university
- b) my sister(s) or brother(s) went to university before me
- c) one parent, or both parents attended university before me

5 Your **English**-language education: What is your highest **English** qualification from an institution?
[mark **X**] - NO English certificates ☐

-a completed Masters-level degree ☐

-an completed undergraduate degree ☐

-a high school certificate (e.g. a GCSE, IB) ☐

ISSUES IN LITERACY

6 **Which of these words** would you use to define your experience of essay writing? (circle any)

frustrating enjoyable normal necessary anxiety procrastination
helpless challenging OTHER words?:.....

7 Do you think discussing writing assignments with classmates would be helpful? How helpful?
[circle one choice]

1-not helpful 2-somewhat helpful 3-helpful 4-very helpful

How does it help?.....

8 In your previous studies, have you worked together with classmates on essay tasks? [circle one]

- a) Yes, 2 or more times
- b) Yes, one time
- c) No
- d) I cannot remember

How did it help?.....

9 Have you written an essay of **5000** words or more, in your university education?

No__ Yes__

In which subject? In which language?.....

10 What is your opinion about the importance of writing long essays, for students? [circle one]

1 Not important 2 somewhat imp. 3 important 4 very important

COMMENT?:.....

11 Writing an essay in English is **similar** to writing an essay in my first language (if not English).

1 Disagree strongly 2 disagree somewhat 3 agree somewhat 4 agree strongly

5- NOT APPLICABLE – Only write in English

12 How difficult will writing the essay be for you, in your course?

1 Not difficult 2 somewhat difficult 3 difficult 4 very difficult

WHY?:.....

13 What do you think of the quality of your essay writing **now**, in English?

1 Not satisfactory 2 somewhat satisfactory 3 good 4 very good

14 What do you think of the quality of your essay writing, in your first language?

1 Not satisfactory 2 somewhat 3 good 4 very good
satisfactory 5 NOT APPLICABLE- only English

COMMENT?:.....

15 How helpful has **tutor feedback** been for your essay writing?

1 not helpful 2 somewhat helpful 3 helpful 4 very helpful

IN WHAT WAY?:.....

16 Which Business Studies class are you in, on Fridays?

12:00-1:00 _____ 1:00- 2:00 _____

_Thank you for your time. I would be happy to have you participate in my study. Please see the **consent form**, which is attached. This is not a binding contract.

This consent form is for the Literacy Study (Constantine Dimitriou) being conducted within [BLANK] programme, and specifically its Business Studies class.

Key issues:

Through this research, Mr. Dimitriou hopes to understand better how students in your discipline understand and discuss their writing. This will not be a judgemental exercise **and no student will be given a score or judged**. It is only an **exploratory** study examining students' literacy cooperation.

Mr Dimitriou wishes to record these discussions on video media so that he can study the group's interactions. The video will be viewed by himself only. Transcripts of these videos will only be shown to his supervisor, and samples of discussion may be shown to the tutor for **validity** purposes only. The transcripts will have the names changed, and **you will not be identifiable** in any way. During the study, the video material will be stored securely and destroyed after my PhD is finished.

Mr.Dimitriou needs participants to be available for a group discussion activity for a period of between 60 and 90 minutes, two or three times, before your [BLANK] ends. These events will occur on campus, at a time which is convenient for you. Mr. Dimitriou cannot promise any payment, but the participants may benefit from having an activity where they get a chance to discuss their concerns about writing, with classmates, and with a writing tutor.

To the best of our knowledge, participating in this research involves **no risk** to you. You may consider yourself to always be free to withdraw from the study, or withdraw your permission, and this would have no adverse effect on your studies, here [BLANK]. The deadline for doing this would be May 20, 2013, because I will begin writing my analysis at that time.

Mr. Dimitriou has received approval from the Director[BLANK], to conduct this research with [BLANK] cohort. I will follow the Humanities code of ethics (for the University of Bath), and the Data Protection Act (1998) and he has received clearance from the ethics panel at U of Bath. If you have **any questions**, please contact Mr Dimitriou at the address below.

.....**CONSENT FORM**.....

I have read and understood the details of this study as explained above, and I agree to participate in this research activity. Please **mark X**, below

____ I wish to participate in this project // I do not wish to participate in this project ____

Print your name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ E-MAIL: _____

Researcher's signature, on obverse side: →

The researcher: I, C.C. Dimitriou, commit to upholding the ethics code and protections, as mentioned above:

Signed:.....

Name: Constantine C. Dimitriou

Office: [BLANK]

School, status: PhD candidate, U of Bath Department of Education,

Phone: 01225-383-301

e-mail: ccd25@bath.ac.uk; c.c.dimitriou@[BLANK]

for Participant: _____

2

NAME: _____

Questionnaire 2 Literacy focus group- beginning

1 Have you written such an essay before?

2 Why have you chosen this group?

3 How much group work has your group done?

4 What do you hope to achieve today regarding this essay?

grammar?

essay structure?

making arguments?

other things?

5 Do you think you can help others today? How?

6 Do you think others can help you today?

7 Do you think that the others have more experience of writing English essays than you do?

2B

NAME: _____

Questionnaire 2 Literacy focus group- beginning

How much writing work have YOU done since the last meeting?

How much group work has your group done since the last meeting?

What do you hope to achieve today regarding this essay?

grammar?

essay structure?

making arguments?

other things?

How will you contribute today?

NAME: _____

Questionnaire 3 Literacy focus group- after each session

1. What did your group achieve today regarding your essay?

-organisation?

-ideas?

-argument?

-other things?

2. Do you think you helped others? How?

3. Do you think others helped you? How?

4. Did you change your opinion of group work today?

APPENDIX 3 ESSAY TASK

Group work – Essay and Presentations ([BLANK] Business, Term 2, 2013)

Take a business firm in London as a case study, research on it, based on face-to-face interview of the business, and write an essay of 2000 words on the following issues:

- 1) Human resources aspect:
 - a. What human resources related legislations affect it and how?
 - b. How it goes about the modern day notion of the 'flexible firm'?
- 2) Marketing aspect:
 - a. How the business handles the issue of 'functional convergence'?
 - b. Discuss any market research the business might have undertaken in the past and present and/or plans to undertake in the future.
 - c. How does the business make use of the Marketing Mix?
- 3) Operations Management aspect: discuss three activities that fall under the operations area of the business.

Take note of the following:

- 1) This essay carries 30% of your total marks for the module, 10% of which is on group presentation and 20% on the actual written essay.
- 2) Presentations will take place in week 10 whereas deadline for submission of the essay is Wednesday, 27 March, 2013 at 3pm online on [BLANK].
- 3) All members of a group should participate during presentations and the presentations should be on powerpoint. On the actual essay, the names and student ID's of each participant should be written on the cover sheet.
- 4) Group meetings should be recorded on brief notes with the list of attendees and issues and challenges
- 5) One hard copy of the essay should be submitted by hand to lecturer.

Additional notes:

- 1) The essay should be done in proper essay format. You can use sub-topics but you are advised not to number them as presented in the question.
- 2) The essay should have brief introductory background about the business (suggested word limit 200 words); brief literature review (350 words); the main body (1,250 words) and conclusions (200 words). There must also be a reference/bibliography in the end using Harvard referencing system.

APPENDIX 4 SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

April 23

[GRP2 I2] anonymised

1 Cher

2 Hank

3 Vana

R Researcher

1]R Yell. scream. I don't care. Just don't whisper too much. So I've got a few questions, if I can tear
2]you away from your... you're all tired, I'm sure. You just got back to classes, right.

3]3 from library, but ya

4]R Thanks for sticking around because this was an opportunity for me as well to get you for a quick
5]interview. Okay. So, can I first ask, how many hours / remember this was your last meeting with
6]me. How many hours of work did you do between that point and the time of submission? 'cause
7]that was Tuesday or Wednesday?

8]3 We didn't meet again

9]2 we met in my room, after

10]1 uhhm

11]3 oh, after, ya, ya

12]2 we still had to finish the conclusion

13]3 right, so maybe under an hour

14]1 Another hour? Right? So we pretty much met for another and Hank put everything together,
15]after.

16]R by himself?

17]3 you know. putting coversheets

18]R that stuff. okay

19]3 references

20]R so, I'm going to look more widely at the learning process that might have happened through
21]this essay. I say "might", but I'm sure something did happen. The first question is "Why did the
22]tutor give you this task to do?

23]3 I guess maybe he wants us to learn through

24]2 a real

25]3 a real case

26]2 a real company

27]3 a case

28]2 Instead of just learning

29]1 3 theories

30]2 theory a lot

31]3 Also it covers three lectures. So, HR, Marketing and Operations. And that's how he came up

32]with the three questions, I suppose

33]R So, okay as a written task, what do you / What did you learn about business essays, then,

34]through this particular writing of the essay? What do you think you learned about writing

35]business essays? Either the process or the finished product. What do you think you might have

36]picked up?

37]3 Me. I think to write in really precise and within in a limited word / word limit. It was rather

38]difficult.

39]R Did you pick up anything with regards to, well, the structure of business essays and why they're

40]particularly that way?

41]2 No

42]1 no

43]2 they're just more / it's different

44]1 he didn't (...) about...

45]3 it's not straightforward

45]1 the structure

46]2 the word limit and

47]1 the content

48]2 And the questions too, they were pretty much the guides we needed, I think. And we could not

49]go much different from that, as we actually tried. That (...) goes. We pretty much answered the

50]questions

51]R So do you think it was an example of a business essay? or do you just think it was something

52]that you wrote

53]2 I don't really know if the business essay are usually like that

54]3 I'm sure it is like that. You start off with an introduction

55]2 How is it that it's called a report

56]3 Business report?

57]2 ya

58]3 Business report is different. It will be shorter ...

59]2 it's not really a report

60]3 and everything will be like in bullet points. But I mean the sentences will still be the same.

61][audio 5:00]

62]3 It's not like you have many ways about describing a company or facts. The language is the
63]same. It's just, essays are longer so the organisation is different. You have an introduction, main
64]body with different body parts. then the conclusion. You there's a Literature review which is not
65]a business report, so...

66]R Alright. And so what do you think, in general terms, is the relevance of this task or essay or
67]whatever you want to call it, to the business courses that you're probably going to move on to?
68]What sort of relevance would you say there is?

69]3 the structure can be any more different. It's a pretty general structure of an essay. I'm thinking
the relevance is the structure of a business essay and you can probably follow that even when you're
doing Masters.

R The question for me would be, you were discussing three different business topics in there. Right?

3 uhhm

R you were taking theory and putting it together with interviews?

3 uhhm

R How relevant do you think that is? You wrote it up and it had the Label "business" on it. Do you
think that because you had some business theory and the interviews together, it was regarding a
business like HR and operations, do you still think it was just any old essay or did it begining to
sound like a business essay, the way I present it to you?

2 There's a practical in the sense that we did an interview of an actual organisation. In the end how a
company works. You just ask someone. I don't know

3 Was your question like, about the structure?

R It could be the content as well really because it was an essay in the basic format, but I'm thinking
yourselves as business students, this was a bit of business theory, interviewing an actual business.
Does it make it a business essay to you, or is it still just an essay?

3 I think it's still an academic essay

R oh, ya. Good point

3 I won't say it's a business essay because we interviewed a real business

R You caught my mistake. I meant to say Business studies, not business business. Because you've
actually been working, I suppose. What I meant to say is business studies, because that's probably
where you're going on to, isn't it?

3 Ya, I guess the whole point of writing the essay is to actually study a real business and not just the
theories of it. Then again, like different theories will apply differently to different kinds of companies

R That's great. And so what did the actual interview part of it mean for you as Business students

3 The interview part?

R I guess it was questions by email or was it an actual interview?

3 well, kind of both I know the interviewer (sic) personally, so I'll be asking him personally, but / and then, after that these two will ask them the relevant questions (...) on email

R Okay. Interesting. I'll ask again depending on how each of you had different experiences. What does it mean to have the opportunity to interview an actual company, I guess, for lack of a better word, when it comes to studying business?

2 it's the practice of the theory, I guess.

1 I think it helps you to remember theory

2 (...) even for the (...)

[audio 10:00]

1 (...) Like organisation structure

2 You can use it as an example of ...

R Terrific. Do you think that the business people were primarily truthful or would you say careful? Rather than truthful.

1 [laugh]

3 I guess truthful in the sense that they tell you what they know. We're not asking anything about taxes or their accounting, so they were pretty open about it. Most of them are information that you can find online anyway, so, it's not like they're telling some business intelligence, or anything, so I think they were pretty okay.

2 like we didn't go to the hard questions

R speak up

2 About like price, for example, which is more delicate

3 there's no business secrets in it.

2 Some, there this other presentation at our class, there was like presenting was saying like price for that company was not particularly important, so everyone was just "oh ya". It was clearly like a careful, he just wanted to sound like the company cared about the service and stuff and prices was not...

1 3 [laugh]

2 But in our case, we did not had any questions that would make the company look bad pretty, or anything like that, so I think he was honest with his answers

R 'cause this was just one employee in the business?

3 Ya

R It wasn't an executive, or anything, was it?

3 no

R okay. And so from the thing that you learned, was there anything / still even though it was not really very secret stuff, was there anything surprising or interesting that you picked up from the interview? Something that you weren't expecting?

3 I guess for my part, how much, you know, the actual human resource legislations influence the HR policies in the company.

R Okay. Interesting

3 I guess it just never crossed my mind how companies take legislation that seriously. Actually having the whole policy and procedures in their websites and their internal employees' website as well, or whatever they call it.

2 ya

3 I mean, I doubt that people actually read it, but the fact that it's there...

2 it's a very big organisation so it's, I think I didn't expect there to be so many things involved for example in the location. there are so many things that they need to be aware of. They need offices in different locations for different reasons. it's not as simple as it may appear to be.

R Right. So, the next question then is, well, because you kind of mentioned it, but I'd like to ask a clear question about this. When you were looking at the market or HR or operations, did you notice anything that was different between theory, or, you know, rather some presented different in the theory and different from what you found? Even though you mentioned those couple of points. Do you think it's a difference between reading about a company in a book and then going out? Or do you think that theory is a bit of a short cut? How did you put those two together? What you might have read and what you saw when you interviewed.

3 I think theories is like a starting point. It kind of tells you where to look and what to focus on what on, or what to ask. Then you go on and ask these questions. Theory's just telling you what's important and what's not. There's so much to know about a company, especially a company that big. With theories, it gives you...

1 I still (...) basically the same

[audio 15:00]

3 huh?

1 The theory and the reality they are basically the same. Right?

3 I wouldn't say they're the same all the time, but it gives you a basic understanding of, you know,...

1 Direction

3 Basic understanding of business. Every business has its own policies or different operations, the way to do things

R Terrific. I got one more specifically / well, general question. I might want to turn the camera on for this one. Can you just show me an example how you expressed the / Some of the ideas from your interview on paper. Literally an example of how you took something that was mentioned to you and presented it on paper

3 Like a theory? And then,

R actually, no something from the interview. Some information you got from the interview. Can you just explain to me one of the ways, or one or two examples of how you put that on black and white, on paper.

3 maybe, something about the purchasing?

2 ya, it's pretty easy.

3 so, that would be

2 the purchasing operations

R an actual sentence. One or two.

2 of the paper?

R ya sure

2 So, "the company is centralised within each subsidiary which have its own facilities management team that is responsible for purchasing paper pens blackboards, etcetera. So, this would mean that the company / each office of the company is centralised and is dependent in purchasing its "necessary stationery stuff

1 stationery stuff

2 the (...) like, the company is either centralised or decentralised. He explains / in here it's explained that the company is centralised within each office.

R did you paraphrase his ideas or did you try to get it word for word

3 I think paraphrase

2 ya. It was the way / the way to make it an academic paper, it has to be a little more formal English

R I remember you having a joke about that, about some of his language and not use it on paper. That was one of your many funny segments. Like a comedy show for a while there.

R Okay. I've got a few questions specific to your experiences here. So, how did the literature review work out. you were talking about doing it in three parts or in one part. How did that work out?

3 I think in the end we kind of wrote it separately, but we put them together in three different paragraphs, but we couldn't quite link it, I guess

2 It was kinda very, how do you say, like, I don't know. (...) Gap between the sections

1 I didn't flow

2 but it went like, we did subheadings.

3 So it's literally just three sections of literature review

2 but the literature review doesn't have some headings. It's quite like...

3 I would have preferred for it to have subheadings, but he insisted

2 he didn't want it to ...

3 there shouldn't be subheadings in literature review. Nothing we could do about it

R you said once in the first stage that there was no room for citing other books. Did you stick with that or try to cite other books? Other than the coursebook, Capon

3 No

1 Capon

[audio 20:00]

R Capon or something. what's it called. Capone

2 (...) short on theory

1 Really general

2 We wouldn't really be able to add anything else, because there's really not many words for the literature review part. we literally did one paragraph each

R right. Okay. I remember another part of the first session. You were mentioning about the structure from the powerpoint. Did you stick with that structure from your powerpoint?

3 No. We ended up sticking to the structure that he wanted us to. (...) Structure I guess

223]R The next thing is, you met in this session here that I have on the video and you had to, besides
224]editing and putting the thing together, you had cut away some language and some sentences
225]and stuff like that. How would you describe that process? How did it go? Did you cut sections?
226]Sentences? Words? Bits and pieces?

227]2 We cut sections to make it shorter and stick to the word limit. We also changed some
228]sentences that were not very clear or coherent. What else?

229]3 We did try to shorten, like the longer sentences. Or, putting three sentences into one. A lot of
230]word cuttings.

2 (...) objective. But in the end we had some space for more. Remember?

3 That was towards the conclusion. Right? We were pretty good in sticking to the word limit. We didn't go too much over.

R Part of that process I think there was a bit of a complaint that came from Cher about you changing the meaning of something she had written.

1 I did?

R You might have been joking. I think I have it here

2 he couldn't tell if you were serious

1 Did I complain?

R I think so, ya

1 I think I was joking

[playing video]

2 Oh ya. I remember that

1 I look pissed [laugh]

2 Then you understand, because it don't make sense

R What do you think ? / I can play it again. What do you think about that situation?

3 I think we did come back to some sort an agreement, of what she meant

2 It was very confused

1 [laugh]

2 "In terms of market research, market research is that" that's what she said. You don't remember?

1 I cannot remember it

3 You don't remember what you wrote. I don't remember, either, but I remember discussing it and then come to the conclusion of what you thought you meant to say.

2 You didn't actually say and then you were "ah, ya". You were right

R So we did come to a happy conclusion there. That's basically all I have at the moment. I just wanted to thank you all again for taking time out. Perhaps get us ready for the feedback stage, if there is one. Boy I hope there is. If there isn't, the show must go on. If there's no feedback, we'll just have to...

1 skype

R There won't be anything to discuss if there's no feedback

[audio 25:00]

APPENDIX 5 SAMPLE OBSERVATION TRANSCRIPT

[GRP1 O2] anonymised

1 Hin

2 Su

3 Yan

[dvd 2a starts]

2 Okay, I have it over here.

3 (...) paragraph

2 Maybe we can delete it now from here and change the parts that we like to...

2 Sorry how about [to 1]

1 Ya. Ya. Yes

2 [00:16] You need to change what part?

3 [reading] "In business".

3 Can we change "In business". Not start with "in business"

2 is that what you want to do? Is that what you want to change?

3 I start with "legislations." Not (...) "have to be involved in every human resource activity. It's kind of weird that "in business" it sounds like

2 Employment (...)

3 but the structure. You don't put "in business", and comma

2 It doesn't feel wrong but if you want to change it.

2 Okay, Hin?

3 (...) "Station have to be involved in business and (...) human resources department is not...

2 Human resource activities should be ...

3 Because we talk about human and now you talk about human resource. (...) point again.

2 Let me / do you have / do you have another question?

R No. no. no. the ones/ I can ask those at the end. That was the important one, for now.

2 So you want to say "legislations have to be involved in business and Store Human resource department is not an exaggeration."? Do you want to say this?

3 I think it's better. You don't have to repeat "human resources" "human resources"

2 Hin?

1 I don't think we can change this because just like this will ask why suddenly you put human resource here.

2 I vote for remaining the same. I like the sentences

3 Okay then. Move on [dvd 2a 3:52]

2 Did you mean 'had'?

1 "Had". Ya, sorry

2 [4:04] I do not like "big legislation". What do you mean by "big legislation

1 I mean/ I don't know the word. I mean they pay more attention in this one. [to the legislation] but I don't know the word

[cam 2a begins]

2 "Significant"?

1 Significant?

2 Remarkable? Instead of "big"?

1 Ya, but...

3 I don't understand either. "Big legislation"

1 Like "very care", I mean, they / something like this

2 Important

1 ya

3 "Major" type "major". Not "important". I think "major" is better important

1 Did you mean "major"?

[dvd 2a 5:00]

1 Mmmm [thinking] major?

3 Important

1 "major"? I don't think it cover enough words. [dvd 2a 5:18]

3 [dvd 2a 5:19] [reading] "by the company, especially health and safety at work, legislation is very important In Store"

2 please type "Store" right

1 sorry?

3 "Especially health and safety at work. Legislation is very important in Store"

3 I don't quite understand. [to 1]

1 Me too. Now, me too. Aah. Why you don't understand? Legislation here is / the whole phrase to call this one. understand me? They call it "health and safety legislation"

3 why you put "and major legislation" and not just...

2 there is too much word here. This is 186. We need to short / cut down some parts and we need to add the sex discrimination and disability discrimination. Therefore we will cut most of the parts

1 Why?

2 Sorry for that. It is too much word

1 ya. I know, but you should put a lot

2 because in the presentation introduction we talked about disability discrimination and sex discrimination and we need to talk about it on the essay as well

1 ya.ya.ya

2 okay now. First (...) "find legislations have to be involved in every human resource department is not an exception." Perfect "The health and / cut "especially"

3 "according to"

2 "The health and safety at work"

1 "is very important"

2 "Which is applied/ which is applied..."

3 ya

2 "health and safety work legislation which is applied by the company

3 by the Stores

2 the health and safety work legislation

1 maybe "law". Maybe change "law"

3 no "legislation"

2 "act", maybe "act" is better?

1 it say you "act"

2 "the health and safety work act which is applied by the company..."

1 so you can use this one

2 "Covers"

1 okay. now switch "is applied by the company".

2 okay. "Is applied by the company"

3 ya

2 Full stop. "according to this act, training courses..."

3 Why not type "Store" instead

2 "According to this act / According to act

3 "The act"

2 [reading and writing] "The act, training courses for health and safety are held/ "health and safety training courses"

3 "Training courses are held every year"

2 "Health and safety training courses are held / not. Can we find something instead of "held"?"

1 I try

2 "every year for every staff" "has to be"

3 "applied" you used "applied" tried before

2 "training" "given" "given training" "has to be given" " "has to be given". I think "given" is fine "has to be given"

1 okay

2 "every year to staff"

1 ya. "in order"

2 "staffs to ensure that employees can react in emergency such as fire." "to ensure that employees can react" not "react" "according to..."

3 [reading to self] " health and safety (...) to ensure that"

2 "to ensure that employees have knowledge on..."

"[cam 2a 5:00]

1 No. it's not "knowledge". "can react". "Knowledge" is just know about this

2 okay "have knowledge on reaction"?

1 "on reaction"? how about "react". Just "react" is okay?

2 "to ensure that employees could re" / I don't like. "can react in emergency". "react in". I'm not sure about "react in"

1 sure just "react in"

2 [dvd 2a] [reading Hin] "(...) such as fire and bomb scare" "health and safety policies help employees feel safer and more motivation"

3 [reading Hin] "emergency event, such as fire and bomb scare. Health and safety policy have made employees feel safer" [dvd 2a 10:03]

[dvd 2a 10:00]

2 "more motivational". I don't think "more motivation" is correct. it should be "more motivational" or something like that

1 why? I think it's okay.

2 "more motivation".

1 Feel?

2 “more motivation” it doesn’t feel strong. It should be more “more motivational” to me

1 oh. Yes. Okay. “more motivational” and that’s all. We don’t need to add more. Because we (...) here and here it’s okay. Right? Because met employees (...)

2 but the cases. The trainings are not only about field employee, more safer employment, motivation, also they want to ensure the customer’s safety as well, so...

1 ya. I know. But in this case, we talk about human resource. So, I just want to focus on employee. If we talk about something general about the company, about how to (...) customer, I will talk about two way...

3 In don’t think “motivation” is a good word.

1 okay

3 “Motivations” are you give them something to work harder for it, you know?

1 ya

2 but, that’s because they feel more safer. maybe they have more motivation as well [dvd 2a 11:24]

3 I think it’s like

2 please type Store correctly

1 I tried. You can / okay

2 “safer”. there is something wrong with “safer”

3 [dvd 2a 11:41] However [reading] “an employee at Store met with an accident (...) met with an accident (...) safe get (...)”

2 “Met with an accident”?

1 Ya. I showed it already.

2 “Met with an accident”. is it correct?

1 Yes. It’s correct

3 “Had an accident”

1 no

2 “Met with an accident” [unresolved. Unfought.left?]

1 I showed it already. so I used ... [dvd 2a 12:10]

2 [dvd 2a 12:11] “Because of unsafe gate” there’s no “a” over there

1 no. “an”

2 ya. You wrote “a”. “because a unsafe”. there’s no “a”

1 no. “an”

2 No. Just “unsafe”

1 why? Because it's just one gate, so...

2 There is no "a unsafe" it's just "unsafe gate"

1 no. "an" or "the" or something. You have to put it

2 okay I will put "the" "Because of the unsafe gate in the storage"

3 don't put that here because you didn't mention about this unsafe gate before. So don't put that

1 why no. we put / Sorry. We have to put 'an' here

2 "Because of an unsafe gate in storage"

3 ya. That's okay

1 ya [dvd 2a 13:00]

[cam 2a ends]

2 "A safe system". No, it doesn't "A safe system at work was not ensured, In periodic maintenance"
"A safe system at work was not ensured"

3 (...) [reading]

2 [under breath "(...) unsafe gate"]

2 "Work was not ensured" They did not make the periodical control?

1 ya. [agree]

2 let's just say...

3 they didn't what? What did you say?

2 [13:54] "due to the"

2 they did not make periodical control [to 3]

2 "Due to the / due to the/ due to the lack of periodic controls. Okay "Due to the lack of periodical controls"

1 No. it's not control, it's maintain

2 "Periodical maintain.. periodic

3 what is that "maintain / "periodic maintain"

1 it mean "check and fix". how can I say? You can explain for her? [to 2]

2 Check if it's work or not and just repair it

1 Ya. ya

2 [dvd 2a 14:35] "Due to the lack of periodic maintenance, the unworking [dvd 2a 14:43]

3 "Not efficient

2 sorry?

3 Not efficient . "unefficient" [not sure]

2 unofficial?

1 no

3 "Not working". Don't say "not working"

2 I'm trying to find some word instead of "unworking"

3 "unefficient" "Inefficient"

[dvd 2a 15:00]

1 No. It's different

2 "Inactive, functionless, non-operating" [computer dictionary]

3 functionless [dvd 2a 15:18]

1 What do you want to change?

2 [dvd 2a 15:26] What was the word? In this case, what is not working? What is the part? What doesn't...

3 I don't quite really understand, actually

1 The thing is not working is they lost some part inside

3 What part?

1 of the gate, but I don't try to write...

2 fire exit, do you mean?

1 no.no. it's not fire exit.

3 Why do you want to talk about the gate? What is it?

1 I'll try to find

2 it's discrimination of health and safety worker. That's why

2 can you just say whatever you know?

3 What happened to that gate? That's my question. What happened to it?

1 because they didn't check it and they don't know that there something inside the gate lost, or

2 So they locked in the store?

1 Not locked in the store. The accident here is (...) because the gate is like that [drops paper], without control.

2 oh, so this is the type of gate that goes up ready to open and to close, it goes down

1 ya. It's out of control. So, it automatically closed down. Cannot control. So, it make...

2 there's a camera who shows the movement. so there's no movement. The gate closed itself

1 no. It's not movement. Because a car tried to come in and the door should be / I don't remember exactly...

2 Should be open

1 open or closed on time. However, because it's out of control, so the movement is not right and it caused the accident.

2 so the door just crashed to the car

1 ya, ya. something like that. But, we don't need to explain it in detail [dvd 2a 17:17]

2 (...) "met with an accident

3 is that mentioned in a Store?

1 in Store

3 A car? Is this a car?

1 A truck into the storage

2 [dvd 2a 17:34] "However in November 2010, due to the lack of periodic maintenance" okay, just "due to the lack of periodic maintenance, an employee ...

1 Now if you just write this, they don't understand. What should be maintained? Or something like that.

2 "of transporting doors". Can I say the name of that doors. Transporting doors. The doors that truck get in [asking R]

3 "Automatic door

2 storage/ the storage part. Inventory part. The... upload part. Loading part

R Loading dock. (...) Loading dock

2 "due to the lack of periodic maintenance of loading dork. Right? D-o-r-k

R "loading dock door" I think is the best you can do.

2 "d-o-c-k door" "loading dock door" "Due to the lack of periodic maintenance of loading dock door, the door fell down"

2 can I say "fell down"

1 no. no. why you have to? It's too detailed. We don't need to

2 I will delete all of this. I will just write everything in one sentence and then I will delete all of the rest of it.

1 Why? This is too complicated, and...

2 no it's not. "However, in November 2008, due to the lack of...

1 okay. Wait, wait, wait. Look at this one. This is the main thing. Is the real thing. Look at this. This one here. Maybe I explained...

2 [reading] "this (...) Operation of the gate ...Broken locking pin"

3 okay?

2 "Due to the lack of periodic maintenance / "Due to the lack of

1 so because I don't try to explain more. I know, but I just mentioned about accident

3 Why you want to mention about one example. I thought we only talk about what (...) they have and that will be enough

1 No, no, no. the question asks about how the human resources is affected by the legislation

[dvd 2a 20:00]

1 So this could be/ It should be two way. (...) and politic way, right? [dvd 2a 20:02]

1 I didn't want to do / okay, okay. [2 typing- 1 watching]

2 [dvd 2a 20:14] can you send me the mail address? I need...

1 we can believe in this? Right?

2 Who is the writer?

1 I don't know, but this is ... [looking]

I think it's "Shut down instead of...

2 Can you find me the ... [to 1]

2 Okay I will write "shut down [to 3]

2 can you find me the writer?

1 (...) the writer. This is / Is okay, right? Is a new paper

2 okay. Can you just ... um [dvd 2a 20:41]

1 What you want to do?

3 just (...)

2 [dvd 2a 20:50] [typing] "door Shut down/ shut down on the truck

3 "Uncontrolled

2 "because of broken missing pin

2 Was that "missing pin" ? [to 1]

1 I don't know [reading source] "Broken locking pin and missing parts"

2 [writing] "Broken"

2 okay. Thank you [to 2] [typing] "broken pin" [dvd 2a 21:15]

2 okay. That's it. We are done with health and safety policies.

2 Hin. Then you will write about...

1 No no no. and then, what happened? [ref to text] Why are we just keep ...

2 [dvd 2a 21:28] As a consequence, I will delete all this part. Okay? Gone. [reading] "As a consequence of disrespect for.." is this disrespect? [to 1]

1 mm?

2 “As a consequence of the disrespect for the section two of the Health and safety at work” “health and safety at work”

3 what do you mean by “Section two” ?

2 the Section two of the act, do you mean?

1 yes.

3 okay

1 We will explain this in the literature review. Okay?

2 ya. Okay

2 “Company X was fined”

2 Why it was fined this much and paid this much? [to 1] [points]

1 the cost to fix this one is fine because they disrespected. Okay? [dvd 2a 22:11]

2 okay. Perfect. how many words? Nice [on computer]

1 [reading to self] and what happened after that?

2 [dvd 2a 22:26] Can you say something “After this accident”, did they make some change for their periodic maintenance or something? Something that affected their application of act?

1 No. no. They don’t have. Wait, wait, wait [reading] no.

2 just, they pay something and they didn’t do anything?

1 no. no. We don’t know. Just, we don’t know.

3 is this (...) disrespect

2 sorry?

3 I’m not sure about “disrespect”. I know what you mean [to 1], but I don’t think it’s called disrespect. “Disrespect” is like you...

1 because he used the other word, I did not to use that

2 okay. Let’s try to find something

1 they use the word “breach” and I tried to change the word, so I used disrespect

2 Negligence. Negligence. Neglectfulness. Something like that

1 ya. Neglect. Negligence [computer]

2 negligence

[Computer] negligence

3 [laugh] negligence

1 Is it okay? Are you sure about the meaning of this one? [END OF SAMPLE]

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